

*Charlotte Corday*  
✧ *and Certain Men of* ✧  
*the Revolutionary Torment*

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*Marie Cher*

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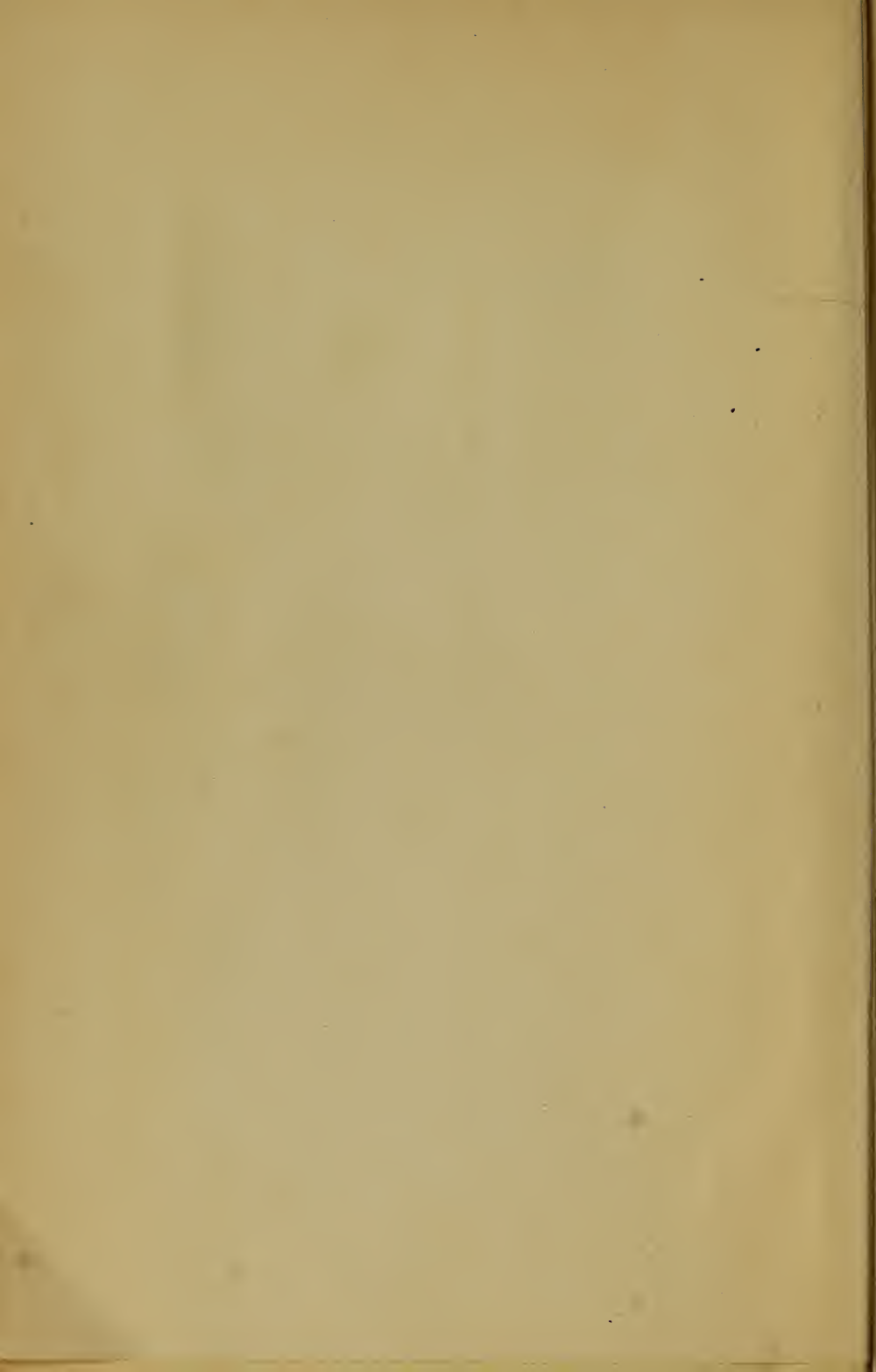
**ANNEX**

WITHDRAWN





CHARLOTTE CORDAY ✧ ✧  
*and* CERTAIN MEN *of the* ✧  
REVOLUTIONARY TORMENT







*Photograph by Levy et Neurdein, Réunis*

*Musée de Versailles*

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

*Painted from life by Jean-Jacques Hauer  
in the prison of the Conciergerie*

CHARLOTTE CORDAY \* \*  
*and* CERTAIN MEN *of the* \*  
REVOLUTIONARY TORMENT  
*by* MARIE CHER \* \* \* \*



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## I

TO be a lineal descendant of the grand Corneille might very well indicate some turn in the blood toward the heroic, toward the "noble" attitude—as much of head as of heart—in regard to tyranny. There was something of the seventeenth century in Charlotte Corday. She embodied, actually, in herself, those qualities that her famous ancestor had made a commonplace for his dramatic characters, so that the adjective *cornélien* came into use to express this purity, heroism, high faith, this icy quietude of the will, together with the narrowness of the fanatic—as narrow as a knife-cut. Charlotte Corday was as far as possible removed from other feminine agitators that the revolutionary turmoil threw up—from Théroigne de Méricourt, from Olympe de Gouges, or from Madame Roland, that expert animator of a salon, who enjoyed intensely using her fine eyes and her fresh-coloured charm on the new men just then climbing into power. Charlotte had a masculine directness, a complete lack of pose, a simplicity not without hauteur,

and an amazing self-control. The last she possessed so completely that it even gained her a measure of courtesy on that stifling July night when her work on Marat was accomplished.

From what is known of her life before the arrival of the hunted Girondins at Caen in June, 1793, it is possible to form the image of a woman waiting—solitary in the old house of her relative, Madame de Bretteville, drunk with her reading, her Plutarch, her Voltaire, her Rousseau, with all the impassioned foamy flood of revolutionary pamphlets that the presses of Paris were turning out daily. What a contrast, all this subversive movement in her mind to the milieu in which she was bred! Caen was a semi-mediæval city of churches, of half-timbered houses, of inner courts, of tortuous dark alleys. Its silhouette on the skyline was broken along all its length by an irregular jet of spires and towers, as though through the winding streets giants, at attention, were holding up enormous spears. The great churches and convents still crowd upon each other, from the Conqueror's Saint-Etienne, the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, severe and cold and rigid like a man in chainmail, to La Trinité, the Abbaye-aux-Dames, the church of Matilda, a woman's church, freer, more feminine, with a

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kind of nobleness and grace. Surging out of street and square come the flamboyant Saint-Pierre, carved and worked like a reliquary; Saint-Sauveur with belfry and spire; the venerably irregular Saint-Jean with its bold fretted tower upon which Charlotte Corday might have looked from the house of her old cousin; Saint-Gilles, masking an eleventh century core; Saint-Nicolas of the curious apse, lapped about in the green silent spread of its graveyard, choked with box and ivy, dark with cedars and yews.

These and other mouldering buildings might be conceived to exhale a kind of historic breath, to give out a vibration capable of being registered by the sensitive. But eager, passionate youth in those early days of 1792 gave no heed to the subtleties of æsthetic leisure, for the revolutionary pot was beginning to boil like a witch's cauldron and the intoxication of the new ideas was in the very air.

## II

**M**ARIE-ANNE-CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY D'ARMONT was gently born, of an old Norman family whose origins can be traced in charters of the eleventh century. She was also a descendant of Pierre Corneille, whose grand-daughter had married Adrien de Corday. At the time of her birth, July 27, 1768, at Champceaux (Orne), her father, Jacques-François de Corday, was living with his family in a thatch-roofed farmhouse. He owned property at Corday, near Falaise, whence the name, and also at Argentan, and at Mesnil-Imbert, but there was no money, and Charlotte, the youngest of three sisters, with two brothers to be provided for, had no prospects in a worldly sense.

In her childhood she was often at the Château de Glatigny, owned by the elder branch of the Corday family. When she was ten or twelve years old she was sent to live with her uncle, the Abbé de Corday, at Vicques. There is a tradition that he taught her to read in the works of Corneille, their common ancestor. Later, with

her sister, she was placed in the convent of the Abbaye-aux-Dames at Caen to finish her education. Madame de Belzunce was then abbess, to be succeeded by Madame de Pontécoulant. It was there that Charlotte met Alexandrine de Forbin, who was later to become a canoness and whose affairs were to be the ostensible cause of Charlotte's journey to Paris in 1793.

She evidently was allowed a certain liberty in the books that she read—Plutarch and Corneille fed her love of disinterested liberty, encouraged the stoic strain in her, Rousseau and Voltaire provided other, but no less stimulating, nourishment. With a mind aflame she welcomed the revolutionary outburst of 1789. In 1790 came the suppression of the convents, and Charlotte and her sister were obliged to leave Caen and go back to their father at Mesnil-Imbert. There, with feverish interest, she followed, as well as she could, the course of the Revolution, especially the dramatic events in Paris, poring over whatever political pamphlets came her way. In the speeches of certain eloquent deputies of the Right, she seemed to hear anew echoes from the classic past she loved. In 1791, with her usual quiet decision, she left her father's house and returned to Caen, no doubt feeling stifled in the



country, and knowing that in the chief town of Calvados she would be nearer the political activity that fascinated her. She was fortunate enough to persuade her elderly relative, Madame de Bretteville, to give her shelter in the Old Manoir opposite the church of Saint-Jean. There, in her room with its hooded fireplace and great blackened ceiling beams, Charlotte settled herself and her books, free to dream her heroic dreams.

In this June of 1791 the revolutionary movement was gaining momentum with each day, like a monstrous projectile rolling toward an abyss. Its first unconscious impetus had been given by the assembling of the States-General in May, 1789. This had brought together in the little royal city of Versailles representatives from all over France of the three grades of Society: the Noblesse, the Clergy, the Third Estate. Of the last there were more than six hundred deputies, mostly educated men chosen from the middle and professional classes. At first timidly, then with growing boldness and anger, they asserted their right to a voice in the government. The old feudal constitution of society was breaking down, cracked in a thousand places, and

through these cracks young democracy was pressing up into the light and air. The Court was paralyzed by its age-old protocol, by its contemptuous fear of what the deputies might do were they once allowed to feel their power. Many of the Clergy and a few of the more enlightened Noblesse had thrown in their lot with the Third Estate. Supported and encouraged by the Comte de Mirabeau, a general body was formed, to be known as the National Assembly. This was ominous to the Court, but the reaction to it of the latter was but childish. When the deputies arrived for their morning session on the twentieth of June they found the doors of the hall closed against them by order of the King. This pin-prick in the hot June weather was as dangerous as a sabre-thrust. The indignant deputies swarmed into the old tennis court—the *Jeu de Paume*—and there, in great excitement and enthusiasm, they took the oath never to separate as an Assembly until they had given a Constitution to France.

Meanwhile, in Paris, food was still scarce after a miserable winter of famine; the country was bankrupt of faith as well as of money. The war of pamphlets rose to exasperation; each café had its patriotic orator, more stimulating than wine.

Sedition flew on wings, entering the barracks, busy among the soldiers; mutiny was not far off. At such moments a praetorian guard seems a monarch's only defence, and the King now began to assemble companies of troops, with ominously German names, to hold his capital in check. This determined the municipal sections in Paris to form a Civic Guard, but with what? They must have arms. On the twelfth of July, Camille Desmoulins, a young lawyer, the most brilliant of the pamphleteers, harangued the people in the gardens of the Palais-Royal—the match was lighted, Paris in revolt. Two days later the Bastille fell, and with it the old order of things.

The King temporized, unable to face squarely the alarmingly new situation, being no man of action, unable to decide anything without advice, caught by hereditary and personal inhibitions as in a vise. No hope for him in this amazing political adventure opening before him. He and what he stood for were doomed, because he was what he was: Louis “by the grace of God” King of France; perhaps, also, because Mirabeau died; perhaps, also, because the Queen lived.

The first Mayor of Paris, Bailly, had been chosen, and now behind him the Commune fortified itself. La Fayette, with the prestige of his



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American services, was made leader of the National Guard. But the spirit of disintegration, undermining the old sanctions everywhere in men's minds, could not be controlled by well-meaning declarations, by new liveries for old abuses, by dragging work on a Constitution that might belie the magic of its name after all. Suffering there was in plenty—lack of work, lack of food, lack of hope—and hatred, class armed against class.

### III

IN this revolutionary convulsion the figures of three men come flashing out of the dark, silhouetted upon the reddening sky—Danton, Marat, Robespierre. Their lives were intimately mingled, their deaths violent; the tragic course of all three ran against a background of political intrigue, of insane ambition, of savagely personal loves and hates. Charlotte Corday's knife removed one of them from a world the easier for his going, leaving the other protagonists in instant bitter rivalry, these two physicians to the body-politic, each with his nostrum in his hand, one's health the other's poison. To this rivalry there could be but one logical outcome—death, dealt first by Robespierre, who could walk the softer, hiding his tracks, who knew how to govern with absolutism while sitting quietly alone in a room, up one flight of stairs over a carpenter's shop. The type Danton, bold, generous, the demagogue, the man of the streets, the orator of the tribune, could never, in the long run, be a match for the type Robespierre, the anæmic

precisian, the fanatic who never lost faith in himself and his own incorruptibility.

Georges-Jacques Danton, born in 1760 at Arcis-sur-Aube in Champagne, was of peasant stock. His father, however, had risen in the social grade, had studied law, and had become Procurator in his native town. The son, wild, unmanageable, but brilliantly intelligent, passed in his turn from the hands of the Oratorian Fathers at Troyes to the study of law in Paris. Admitted to the bar in 1787, he married Gabrielle Charpentier, the daughter of the proprietor of the Café du Parnasse, much frequented by hangers-on at the Palais de Justice. With her *dot* and with the economies of his own family, he was able to buy out the practice of advocate to the *Conseil du Roi*.

Vigorous, cordial, ardent, loving life and good living, Danton was popular among his friends and clients. The Revolution broke upon him irresistibly; he was deeply in debt, not unwilling to fish for profit in troubled waters. This was his baser side; but there was another more generous one: he saw in the Revolution a struggle for liberation, for some largeness and freedom in the life of the oppressed.

Since his marriage he had lived in the Cour du Commerce, near the old Convent of the Cordeliers from which the district took its name, as also the political club he was to found, more violent even than the Jacobins. Danton despised moderates like Bailly and La Fayette who would persist in trying to canalize the foaming stream of Revolution, according to the best bourgeois principles. He had a tilt with La Fayette, and so gained the reputation of being an extremist. He gathered about him a troop of young men, clever, impecunious, eager to follow in the wake of a man of Danton's stamp, bound to make his way. Fabre d'Eglantine and Camille Desmoulins were to be with him to the last; there was also Billaud-Varenne, and Chaumette, for whom Danton was to become too moderate, who deserted him for Hébert, the unspeakable *Père Duchesne*. Among more humble friends in the neighbourhood was the butcher Legendre, who had his shop in one of the streets in the shadow of the abbey-church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and the shoemaker Simon, into whose equivocal care the dauphin was to be given, lived in a house opposite the entrance to the Cour du Commerce. All this old quarter of Paris is full of ghosts, especially on a spring night, for it was

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late in March when Danton and Desmoulins were arrested, the first in that Cour du Commerce, a portion of which, truncated, still exists, with its low dormered houses and its shops, Danton's front door being about where his statue now stands, just by the modern Boulevard Saint-Germain. The house where Camille and his wife Lucile occupied an apartment on the third floor stands on the corner of the rue de l'Odéon, facing the Theatre. Only a few paces from Danton, in the rue des Cordeliers, Marat was to be found in an old house with a corner turret, and there it was that, late one July afternoon, he received the visit of a young woman from Caen.

On the new stage set by the feverish events of 1789, Danton, passionate by nature, with the will to dominate, recognized in himself the capacity to seize and play up to any catastrophe some striking rôle. But his hour was not yet come. Now he could only stand in the undistinguished promiscuity of the pit and watch from afar the startling gestures Fate was imposing upon King and People alike.



#### IV

THE first scene is from this autumn: an October day, the great palace of Versailles on its terrace, the gardens with their statues and their fountains and their bosquets, somnolent in this last hour of undisturbed sovereignty. The Queen had gone across the park to her Petit Trianon; near the grotto the yellow leaves were lying thick upon the ground about her. They were falling as she lingered there, but something more exciting than a falling leaf was in the air. . . . Anxious servants appear; her coach; she is sent for hurriedly to return to the palace. The Parisians with that terrifying *impromptu* they handle so well have staged a disconcerting kind of demonstration at Versailles that may very well become dangerous at any moment. A strange army of women has marched out from Paris, crying for bread. Drummers are at their head, and with them are armed men dragging cannon. This is the obvious fact, but what force set them in motion—hunger alone, or certain obscure encouragement received that morn-

ing at the Hôtel de Ville? At all events, it was there that a leader was produced for them in Maillard, with the suggestion that they carry their grievances to the King in person at Versailles; where the King is, there must be bread . . . why not bring the King back to Paris with them? Excellent notion, to be put at once into action. Shouting and singing, the women start, Théroigne de Méricourt in a red amazonian costume among them. They gain male reinforcements as they go, far more equivocal than themselves.

The more or less disorderly crowd reaches Versailles, storms the gates, swarms into the courtyard. The Guards are uneasily lenient; the King offers to see a deputation of the women. But night comes, and with it La Fayette, bringing troops for the protection of the King. Incurable inattention has a way of playing Fate's hand. In the early hours of the sixth of October a hostile mob of men and women succeeds in getting into the palace through an unguarded door, and makes a determined rush for the Queen's bedchamber. There seems little doubt that she must have been its victim had she not fled to the King's apartments, springing from her bed while the Swiss held the door, running



through those private passages she was never to tread again.

Men were killed in the Cour de Marbre, on the great staircase, in the vast gilded rooms; the Queen's apartments were sacked, their precious contents broken or stolen. The mob calmed down at last under the persuasions of La Fayette, who was still popular, his halo of republicanism intact, but the women clung to their original idea that they must take the King back to Paris with them, as a kind of living talisman of good fortune, the royal Baker who was to pour out magical loaves for them, not of mere bread alone. The prestige of Right Divine dies hard. The King and Queen with their children showed themselves on the balcony; La Fayette, still a courtier, kissed the Queen's hand, a gesture pleasing to the crowd.

Then began the march back to Paris; in the midst of the horde the great royal coach rocking from side to side. The Queen had never been so near her people before; unkempt figures thrust their wild faces against the glass to stare in. Her near-sighted look, the very set of her head told against her—pride and disdain were read into what were merely physical characteristics. So "the Austrian," as they called her, started this

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morning, all unknowingly, upon the obscure and pitiful journey that was to end on another October day four years later when she jolted in a rough cart from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Révolution.

## V

THE Assembly followed the King and Court, and henceforward Paris became the burning centre of all France. The old order was now started on a slippery descent; its privileges were abolished; crown lands were to become the property of the Nation, the King to be given a civil list instead; church lands to follow, priests to be paid by the state.

Mirabeau oscillated between the Assembly and the King, trying for some Constitutional compromise, but his hands were not sufficiently clean for an exacting patriotic standard: he was secretly a royal pensioner. This fact becoming known, partly by his own imprudence, ruined his influence with the people.

Political societies or clubs began to be formed in the winter of 1789-90, to become increasingly powerful; first, the Jacobins, to which Robespierre belonged, taking its name from the abandoned convent on the rue Saint-Honoré in which it held its meetings; second, the Cordeliers, on the other side of the river near the Faubourg

Saint-Germain, the creation of Danton. When the deputies from the Gironde came up to the Legislative Assembly in 1791 they affiliated themselves with the Jacobins, giving their name, Girondins, to the moderate group thus formed, with such men as Condorcet, Brissot, and their followers.

In the winter of 1790 the members of the Assembly showed themselves frankly anti-clerical; in the spring they reluctantly voted that the Catholic religion was that of France, but they added that all priests were required to take an oath of fidelity to the Civil Constitution; a French Church was to be organized, almost independent of Rome.

This met with violent opposition throughout the country, and the majority of the clergy refused to take the oath. Those who did so were called Constitutional priests; those who did not, refractory. The King was willing to sign the Constitution but he would have nothing to do with a Constitutional priest. In April, 1791, at Easter, he decided to drive out to Saint-Cloud to hear Mass said by a priest who had not taken the oath. It was Danton's followers in the Cordeliers who poured out, armed, to surround the Tuileries and prevent the "flight" of the

King. After sitting in the coach for several humiliating hours, the King returned to his apartments, manifestly a prisoner; Paris was guarding him not like a prince but like a hostage. Shy and confused as he was, this hardened him into action, and secret preparations were made for an actual flight. His idea was to withdraw to some distant town near the frontier, there to create a rallying-point for loyal troops. Thus strengthened, he could appeal to the Nation against the tyranny of Paris. Metz was decided upon, and the army of Bouillé was to co-operate with the King.

All through the early June days plans were matured; a great travelling-coach or berline secured; false passports and travelling costumes prepared. On the night of the twentieth, the King and Queen, the King's sister, Madame Elisabeth, the two children, the dauphin and the princess royal, left the Tuileries, disguised so successfully that no one challenged them. The Queen, it is said, became separated from the rest and stood aside as a coach rumbled into the courtyard. In it was La Fayette, to her mind the chief, detested jailor. As the carriage passed her, in feminine triumph, she flicked one of its wheels with a light switch that she held in her hand.



The Swedish Count Fersen, devoted to the Queen, had made all the arrangements for the flight, and was himself on the box of the berline to drive them out of Paris. Then he left them. All went well till they reached Sainte-Menehould. Here, during the changing of the horses, the King got down from the coach, showed himself imprudently, talked in his usual agreeable way. The Postmaster, Drouet, being an intelligent person, familiar with the effigies of the King, recognized him. In the coach were women—the Queen, no doubt, and the children. To the patriot Drouet this settled the matter, the royal family was trying to leave the country.

He did not dare to stop them himself, but he rode on ahead of them to the next village, Varennes in the Argonne, not far from Verdun, to arouse the National Guard there. The travellers reached Varennes to find it all excitement, and their arrest a matter of course. Then began the miserable journey back to Paris, the coach surrounded by armed volunteers from all the country round. In it were now seated Pétion and Barnave, who had been rushed off on the track of the fugitives immediately the news was known in Paris—on the morning of the twenty-first—that the royal family had deserted the



Tuileries. The Queen, with what must have been despair in her heart, gave no sign of discomposure. Her personal fascination was freely used on the two deputies, and such is the power of a royal smile that Barnave and Pétion, by the time Paris was reached, were not quite the same men they had been when they left it.

The entry into the city was deathlike; a compact mass of people eyed the King in silence, and so he returned to his prison of the Tuileries. By this ill-advised flight he had lost every shred of personal popularity. He was even considered to have automatically suspended himself of his kingly function. Throughout the country men were enrolling for the National Guard; a vision of a Republic began to form before hopeful eyes. By the voice of Danton the King's deposition was demanded, but the Assembly now had its precious Constitution nearly completed, and to the deputies the King was necessary as a kind of buffer between autocracy and demagoguery. In operation, the Constitutional Monarch was to be a farce, with the King signing no act of his own free will, creating an insurrection whenever he tried to exercise his right of veto, a prisoner in his own palace.

That wretched flight of his had aroused the

indignation of a whole people; this one act practically created the Republic. The Queen, the Court, the émigrés, were convinced that only foreign intervention could re-establish the power of the King. Their plotting became known, and even the people spoke openly and sneeringly of the "Austrian committee" sitting in the Tuileries. The Assembly continued its attacks on the émigrés, at the head of whom was the Comte d'Artois, the King's brother. It was then decreed that those who did not return to France before the first of January, 1792, were to be punished by death.

In order to utilize the popular excitement that had been quickened by the flight of the King, the Jacobins and the Cordeliers, animated by Danton, busied themselves with a monster petition, demanding the forfeiture of the King's rights, that was to be signed by all patriots on the Altar of the Nation, in the Champs de Mars, in reality, the pretext for a trial of strength between the extremists and the moderates. Bailly was Mayor and La Fayette leader of the National Guard. Of course there was disorder; there always is on such hectic occasions, whether natural or manufactured. Bailly and La Fayette, appearing on the scene with armed troops, were

pelted with stones. Both being purists, firm in what they considered their duty, they ordered the soldiers to fire on the rioters. This was done. Terror and panic followed; there were numbers of wounded and dead. This affair came to be known as the Massacre of the Champ-de-Mars, to be used as a lever by the extremists, only rendered more extreme by the events of this day. Danton was warned that night not to sleep in his house, as arrest was imminent. Perceiving that a momentary eclipse would not be undesirable, he took his wife and child away with him to his native town, to that Arcis-sur-Aube that he held in such great affection, where, in the summer weather, he could give himself up to long, idle, country days, to evening talks with his neighbours.

## VI

**T**HIS affair of the Champ-de-Mars, in July, 1791, had brought Robespierre and Danton into juxtaposition. Both were prominent in their respective clubs; both had been warned of the danger of arrest. Martial law had been declared in the city, and a menacing demonstration had taken place outside the Jacobin Club. Robespierre was lodging at that time in the rue de Saintonge, in the Marais. As he was trying to disengage himself unnoticed from the crowd, the Carpenter Duplay, a humble member of the club, went up to him and suggested that he take refuge in his house, close by in the rue Saint-Honoré, not far from the church of the Assomption. Robespierre accepted, and so well pleased were guest and host by this arrangement that it became permanent, Robespierre sending in a day or two for his belongings in the rue de Saintonge. The Duplays put at his disposal a small room with a dressing-cabinet attached, overlooking the court where the apprentices worked. Here he arranged his few possessions, his modest ward-

robe, his books, his papers; he was quiet, simple in his tastes, making no demands. Duplay was flattered by the presence in his home of one of the rising men of the day, a deputy, a patriot, and soon he and his wife, his daughters, and his nephew, were to become the willing slaves of this guest of hazard, whose ascendancy over them, for the three years he had to live, was to be complete.

Maximilien-Marie-Isidore de Robespierre was born in Arras in 1758, the eldest of four children. Their father, who had married socially beneath him, deserted them after their mother's death, and they were taken in charge by their maternal grandfather, a brewer. Maximilien is said to have been a silent, self-contained child, of a brooding, unhappy nature. But he was studious, and when the time came he was sent up to Paris with a scholarship to the famous Collège Louis-le-Grand, where he was to be the comrade of the brilliant young Camille Desmoulins. From the Collège he passed on to the university, studied law, received his diploma, and returned to Arras to practise his profession. He made his way with difficulty. He was not liked. Assiduous, laborious, he was at the same time vain and



self-conscious, burning to impose himself, but never finding the right way. The States-General to which he was elected, and the Jacobin Club which he joined, gave him his opening. He was pre-eminently the man for a club, in the sense that his genius for political manœuvres, preferably subterranean, gave him gradually an enormous hold over his colleagues, and he had a morbid need to feel himself safe in their midst. There was nothing large and generous in his nature, none of the warmth and enthusiasm of Mirabeau, of Danton. Almost mechanically, by instinct, mole-like, he moulded the Jacobins into an instrument of precision with which he manufactured revolution, with which he launched the Terror. He followed no personal ambition; he lived in his own theories and in those of his master, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He hypnotized himself with words; words that gradually in him came to approximate actions; to act himself, boldly, ruthlessly like Danton, shouldering any responsibility, even that of massacre, was beyond him. He could lay a deadly train, but he could not apply the match—Couthon or Saint-Just, however, was ever there, ready for that feat. He was adept at convincing himself; he believed absolutely what he said, which, as



Mirabeau had early recognized in him, was an enormous political asset. Pétion, who knew Robespierre well, said of him that he had the mania of persecution; he was forever suspecting plots; he saw treason everywhere. The slightest wound to his self-esteem he never forgave. Imagine this type of man—the Incorruptible they called him—with the power of a Roman Emperor: the Terror practically oozed from his finger tips.

During those three years in the Duplay house, where he had been joined by his younger brother Augustin, and by his sister Charlotte, Robespierre lived immersed in the blind adoration of his inferiors, an atmosphere in which his secret nature was most at ease. Constantly pricked in his vanity, in his self-love by his political opponents, he could withdraw to this supposedly Spartan retreat and allow himself to be flattered and worshipped by the worthy Duplay, his excellent wife, and the two daughters, Eléonore and Elisabeth. At the time, the former passed for being the fiancée of Robespierre, but it is extremely improbable that any woman played any part in his life. His sister Charlotte and the Duplay girls served him with the blind worship of acolytes, and that was as far as their

feminine influence went. Elisabeth, with a fresher charm than her sister, attracted the attention of the young Philippe Le Bas, a deputy to the Convention, one of the devoted proconsuls of Robespierre and a frequenter of the Duplay household. She had less than a year of marriage with her adored Philippe, and their boy was but a few weeks old when she saw her husband for the last time on the tragic night of the ninth Thermidor.<sup>1</sup> The honest Duplay, making his gesture of hospitality to the Jacobin leader, unwittingly drew into his house, along with the honoured guest, shame and disaster and death. But at first the arrangement succeeded to admiration: Robespierre expanded in the Duplay circle; in the sitting-room of Madame Duplay he received his friends and admirers, haranguing them, upright, his arm on the mantelpiece, trying on them his oratorical efforts—never too happy; always precisely and carefully dressed, in knee breeches, his hair powdered—a constant

<sup>1</sup> In November, 1793, the Convention voted to establish the Republican Calendar, the new era to commence on the twenty-second of September, 1792, each month to be divided into three decades, each decade into ten days. It was wittily said that the principal use of the new calendar was to suppress Sunday. The months were renamed, for the autumn: Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire; for the winter: Nivôse, Pluviôse, Ventôse; for the spring: Germinal, Floréal, Prairial; for the summer: Messidor, Thermidor, Fructidor.

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reproach to the studiedly dirty and fantastic disarray of Marat and other self-advertising patriots.

In these early days, while Marat and Danton took all the glare of the sunshine, Robespierre remained in the shadow, consolidating his position in the Jacobins, watching for the moment to press forward into the light.

## VII

WHEN the elections to the Legislative Assembly came on in September, 1791, Danton returned to Paris, a law of amnesty having secured him from arrest. To his rage and disappointment he was not elected to the new Assembly. Wounded at the unexpected vivacity of his enemies, at the growth of their power, he withdrew into retirement—like another Marius—was seen no more in his usual haunts; took no apparent part in public affairs. A second son was born to him in 1792, and he moved into a larger apartment in the Cour du Commerce, furnishing the pleasant rooms with a certain luxury. This gave renewed life to the hints of scandal, to the accusations of being a taker of bribes that Danton was to drag after him to the end. So the rumour ran around: he had been bought by Pitt; he had been bought by Philippe d'Orleans. "Such a man as I cannot be bought!" Nevertheless, it is certainly true that he took public money too easily, dipped into any funds that lay to hand. This charge of peculation

was to be skilfully "cooked" by Robespierre when the time came, and indeed Danton himself acknowledged a complete ignorance of where certain secret funds in his budget as minister had vanished to.

War was in the air; the different factions seeing in it a means to their own personal ends. To the Girondins it seemed to assure the definite triumph of the Revolution, the spread of liberal ideas beyond the borders of France; to Robespierre and Marat, more prophetic, it seemed full of the menace of a military despotism. Marat, writing in his news-sheet, *L'Ami du Peuple*, warned his readers against a victorious army and a victorious general, and with characteristic violence called upon the soldiers to drown their leaders in their own blood. But the war-party of the orators, Brissot and Vergniaud, won, and by March, 1792, the King was forced to call in a new Ministry in which the Girondin Roland was Minister of the Interior and General Dumouriez in charge of foreign affairs, with the result that war was declared against Austria. It began ill, and the belief spread that the enemy was informed of French plans by the treason of the Queen.



Danton was furious that Roland had been chosen for a Cabinet post instead of himself—he the powerful yet too disquieting tribune of the Revolution. He attempted at this time a rapprochement with Robespierre whose temperament was the exact antithesis of his own; he spoke at the Jacobins, was violent against the royal family, against the Queen, whom he treated as a traitor to France, in league with the enemy, even suggesting that the King repudiate her, crying out: “I engage to carry the Terror into the Court itself.”

By June popular excitement, skilfully fed, was made responsible for an intimidating demonstration. On the pretext of celebrating the anniversary of the oath of the *Jeu de Paume*, on June 20, thousands of the working men and women of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, mixed with the National Guard, formed into a great procession, the men armed with pikes and wearing the red liberty cap, the women with flags, flowers, green branches. A petition was presented to the Assembly, demanding the abolition of the King’s veto, and of the kingship along with it, if such must be.

Danton had been indefatigable in rousing the sections, in urging insurrection, yet on the ac-



tual day he perceived that this was no way to make a Revolution; too much was being left to chance. He then began to prepare his own formula; his way was to come.

It was now about four o'clock in the afternoon. A certain word having been mysteriously given the mob responded hypnotically; the people demanded to see the King. The Assembly was holding its meetings in the disused Riding-School in the Tuileries gardens; it was but a step to the palace. The gates were forced, guards thrown aside, the royal apartments reached. Through them for three long suffocating hours the people poured in a disorderly wave—shouting, tumultuous, insulting. The King and Queen, without loss of composure, stood in the embrasure of a window, a table hastily drawn in front of them. At this moment the King's easy good-nature—putting on a liberty cap, drinking wine with a patriot—undoubtedly saved him from violence, perhaps even from assassination. At length, in the dusty twilight, when the Queen's endurance was at breaking-point, Pétion, now Mayor of Paris, succeeded in clearing the Tuileries. When the latter had been suspended from his functions as a result of this affair of the twentieth of June, it was Danton

who forced the Assembly to reinstate him. This event shook many into a realization of where they stood; the moderates saw how near all France was to the mob-rule of Paris. The loyal provinces protested at the insult to the King; there was a renewal of sympathy on his behalf.

It is perhaps at this time that an anecdote told of Charlotte Corday may be placed. At a family dinner at Caen she remained seated when a toast to the King was drunk. The company protested—a King so good, so virtuous—but Charlotte replied in that clear voice of hers: "I believe him to be virtuous, but a feeble King cannot be good." So she is somewhat pedantically reported, but nevertheless Charlotte is there completely herself, testifying to her opinions, no matter what the social effect may be—a dangerous girl.

Meanwhile, in Paris, all else was drowned in renewed feverish excitement about the war. Prussia, with the Duke of Brunswick in command, had joined Austria. His army was on the frontier, and the great cry arose that the country was in danger. All over France volunteers were being enrolled, troops from the provinces making their way enthusiastically toward Paris. In this hot July weather came the contingent from

Marseilles, some five hundred of them, singing their splendid marching song, its music streaming on before them like a lighted torch.

On the thirtieth of July the enemy crossed the frontier, and Brunswick issued a manifesto in which he proclaimed himself the ally of the King whose rebellious subjects were promised the death they deserved. This determined the Jacobins and the Cordeliers; the guilt of the Tuileries was patent; they must finish with the King. Danton, Marat, and Hébert were the leading spirits behind the terrorist movement that was now coming to a head. In these hurrying days it was Danton who had been getting together his adherents for the coup d' état he had in mind, no less than the overthrow of Monarchy. His influence was carried far and wide by his devoted Cordeliers. In the troops from the provinces coming up to Paris for the celebration of the national fête of July 14, Danton saw the nucleus for what was to be his armed attack on the Tuileries. In his own quarter, in his own fanatically loyal section, all was being prepared for the event. Later, before the Revolutionary Tribunal, he was to admit: "I made ready the tenth of August." The elements were there; he had the eye, the hand, the

brain to seize and mingle them. He saw that whoever could control the Hôtel de Ville could dominate the Tuileries. A revolutionary Commune must be installed, and this he accomplished, with the help of his friends, on the ninth of August. The sections were ready, massed in haste, in secret, waiting for the signal of the tocsin, the bell of the old convent chapel of the Cordeliers. Danton was in his study in the Cour du Commerce, silent, not able to conceal his agitation. His wife, Gabrielle, clung to Lucile Desmoulins, whose husband had brought her with him. The two women, nervous, emotional, broke into weeping as they heard the clamour of the bells at midnight, caught up from one tower to another throughout the city, announcing the "real" Revolution—Danton's. . . .

The roll of drums comes up from the awakened streets, the tramp of marching men. By one o'clock the new Commune is installed in the Hôtel de Ville. When it is light Danton leaves the Cour du Commerce to take charge of the situation he has created. He sends for Monsieur de Mandat, commander of the National Guard, organizer of the defence of the Tuileries, and when the unfortunate man comes he moves not



a finger to save him from death on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville.

By morning the approaches to the Tuileries are held by federal troops and the armed men of the sections. As it is doubtful whether the loyal Swiss guard can defend the palace, the King, to prevent a massacre, is advised to place himself under the protection of the Assembly. Between nine and ten o'clock in the morning he and the Queen, their children and attendants, escorted by a few guards, walk across the gardens, dry and dusty under the August sun. "How early the leaves are falling this year," Louis is said to have remarked, without seeing any particular significance in the commonplace observation. They, and much else with them—the whole ancient fabric of French Monarchy, for instance.

As the King left the Tuileries the attack began. In two hours the palace was taken and plundered, the Swiss guard killed and mutilated. To Danton's wife and to Lucile Desmoulins were brought "souvenirs" of the looting of the royal apartments—delicate toilette articles from "Antoinette's" dressing-room.

After twenty-four hours of incessant feverish activity, Danton returned home in triumph. The Assembly knew now that it must reckon

with him; he was the leader, the man of the hour. What would he do with his power? He had accomplished what he had set out to accomplish, and the throne of France no longer existed save as a curiosity. Surrounded by a bodyguard of eager and enthusiastic friends, he can scarcely get an hour's rest. At three o'clock in the morning of the eleventh, he is awakened by Camille Desmoulins and Fabre d'Eglantine who shout in his ear: "You are Minister of Justice!" The new Executive Committee then being formed to direct the government was fully aware that Danton must be given his due place. His two young friends never doubted that they, too, would "ascend" along with him. "You must make me Secretary of the Seal," cried Fabre naïvely, who was but a comic poet; "And I," added Camille, "your personal secretary." They had a keen political sense of the "spoils." Danton, half-awake, kept repeating: "Are you quite sure that I am Minister?" "Yes, yes!" they cried. "Come, hurry!" Youth, hungry for power, stirred in them; it suddenly seemed as though the world had become their "thing," their possession, to dominate, to plunder. . . .

In an hour Danton was in the Place Vendôme, in the beautiful Hôtel of the Ministry of Justice,



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and Camille with him, intoxicated by his sudden fortune. He could write to his skeptical old father in Guise in the well-worn jargon of the day: "The cause of Liberty has triumphed!" Then, without any transition, the real *cri de cœur*: "Here I am, lodged in the palace of the Maupeou and the Lamoignon." Thus Camille, the eternal child to whom one has handed down the moon.

## VIII

CAMILLE DESMOULINS, who was to be intimately connected with Danton to the end, was now a little over thirty. He was from Guise in Picardy, born of a good middle-class family. The boy, like Robespierre, went up to Paris with a scholarship to Louis-le-Grand. There the students were given the thorough classical education then in favor, with the natural result that most of these young heads conceived a passion for Republican Rome and were ever ready to quote the most bitter pages of Livy or of Tacitus to point present-day abuses of Court and Monarchy. Camille was thin and delicate, with an eager, vivid face, nervous gestures, and a hesitancy in his speech that maddened him. This physical defect kept him from expressing by word of mouth the picturesque, tumultuous, fiery thoughts that were ever sweeping through him. He soon realized that he must advance himself by writing, not by speaking. He, like so many of the other men of the Revolution, was a lawyer, but desperately poor, without

resources. His father could do little for him, sympathizing not at all with his violent republicanism. Nevertheless Camille would write home pathetically from time to time, begging for small loans of money, for shirts, for bed linen, for anything.

His life is completely obscure from 1784 to 1789 when he emerged, in a day, into celebrity. Privations and humiliations he doubtless suffered, but he never spoke of them. They wounded his pride. He really began to live only from that July day in the Palais-Royal when he first felt the intoxication of power, of success. It was his words—he, the stammerer derisively called “Hon-Hon”—that had sent the people streaming through the city to arm themselves against tyranny; that had led them to the Bastille and to the awakening that followed. But he exaggerated his own importance, he was so passionately anxious to “arrive.” He haunted the men of the hour, was transported with joy at being received at Mirabeau’s table. He now began to produce the pamphlets that were to give him the notoriety he took for fame. So long as he was talked about, he could forbear to see the muddy way he trod. He was violent, unjust, often abject, but a born writer, with style, wit, verve,

much of a *gamin*, too. It was he who first called the King "Louis Capet."

When he got enough money together to start his paper, *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, he attacked with his piquant mockery and irony all the foundations of peace, of government, of decent living. He, who was to die of it, did his share, along with Marat and Hébert, in preparing the Terror. This news-sheet of his made him known throughout France. But while there was yet time for quiet breath, he was given an interlude of happiness. He married Lucile Duplessis. He had admired her handsome mother when she, Lucile, was but a child, meeting them in the green walks of the garden of the Luxembourg, in the quarter where he and the Duplessis family lived. Now the child had become an exquisite young woman and his wife. She brought him a *dot*, the wherewithal to establish themselves in a comfortable apartment in the rue de l'Odéon, near Danton and the Cordeliers. The marriage took place in the church of Saint-Sulpice in December, 1790, Pétion and Robespierre being witnesses. From that time on the households of Danton and of Desmoulins became increasingly intimate, the two young women, Gabrielle and Lucile, finding one another sym-

pathetic, and Camille himself, feminine in his temperament, falling rapidly under the domination of Danton. That rude hand could make itself soft for Camille's shoulder. The orator needed a pamphleteer to support his schemes; here he found one; the two men became inseparable. In July, 1792, Desmoulins' son Horace was born. In the autumn of that same year Camille, bedazzled, followed his "patron" to the Ministry of Justice.

There Danton stood to dominate the whirlwind. It was no time for phrase-making; the enemy was on the frontier. The joviality of his earlier days disappeared; he incarnated now nothing but force, unchained and brutal. By his very ugliness he imposed himself, as Mirabeau had done—by the mere look of his face, flushed and dark, pitted with smallpox, by the flame in the small, deep-set eyes, the sardonic mouth, by that "Tartar" face, as some one said of him. He was carelessly generous, trusting his friends, being used and exploited by them; by many betrayed, notably by Robespierre who completely duped him—" . . . *mon ami jusqu' à la mort.*" His great power was in the spoken word; he gave himself up to his auditors in a torrent of *impromptu*; his passionate earnestness, his bru-



talities of phrase, of gesture, carried all before him. He was the Titan of the Terror, the one man among them all who was willing to follow up his words with a burning deed. He labored with his own hand, though it dripped blood; he did not stand whispering and peering behind his fellows, instigating them to riot or massacre. For the cruel excesses to which he conceived events to be precipitating him, he was willing to take the damning responsibility.

On the thirteenth of August the King and the royal family were taken to the Temple and imprisoned in one of the mediæval towers, a relic of the time of the Knights-Templars. The Queen would remember certain apartments in the modern portion of this rambling pile of which the Prince de Conti had once been Grand-Prieur. Here, in the golden days before the storm, he had given his supper-parties to the Court.

Danton was using all his powers to paralyze any aristocratic counter-revolutionary movement of sympathy with the Monarchy. The Assembly and the Commune had decided to suspend the King from his functions, and to call a Convention to deal with Constitutional matters, meanwhile holding the King as a hostage.

At this critical moment in August, 1792, Danton was the soul of the national defence, the mind whose will to victory galvanized the armies. He made himself practically dictator of Paris. The worst elements of the Commune that he had helped to install in the Hôtel de Ville were more than ready for reprisals. Hatred and fear spread like a low-lying mist over the city. The Prussian advance continued, the revolutionary armies being few in number and badly officered; Longwy fell on the twenty-third of August and Verdun was surrounded; soon a clear way would be open into the heart of France. As the volunteers marched away toward the frontier, who could say what traitors they were leaving behind them? It was the constantly repeated advice of Marat to finish with such at once, to kill, to massacre, to rid the prisons of the vermin that hid there—the nobles, the priests, the rich. At the Hôtel de Ville such blood-letting did not seem a bad thing to drain away a certain aristocratic gangrene from the body-politic. Plans were made in secret for a systematic massacre of prisoners.

On that second of September Danton, in face of the imminent fall of Verdun, aroused the Assembly with what was to be his greatest speech:

"... The tocsin that will soon ring out is not a signal of alarm; it sounds the charge against the enemies of the country. To conquer these enemies what we need is audacity, yet more audacity, audacity always and ever, and France will be saved!" At that hour Danton poured into his voice, his gestures that which burned the memory of him into his hearers' minds; they carried to their death the vision of him that day in the tribune, his savage ugliness transfigured into something as high as beauty by the passionate intensity of his words. Danton then typified France, menaced, at bay. . . .

But these words of his might have been taken in a very special sense at the Hôtel de Ville, had any one there cared to analyze them. The First and Second Murderers (nay, the Fortieth, the Fiftieth!) as in the old plays, had been engaged, their wages even determined upon.

All night long the tocsin had been ringing, cannon firing, creating a state of excitement fatal to the nerves of the extremists. As though at a secret signal, ominous crowds began to collect about the prisons. The first prisoners to be massacred were some priests in the courtyard in front of the abbey-church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. All through that hot September Sun-

day the killing went on, spreading from the Abbaye, to the Carmes, the Conciergerie, La Force. At the last, the Princess de Lamballe, an intimate of the Queen, was hacked to pieces. The crowd forced a frightened hairdresser to arrange and powder the hair on the severed head, to wash and rouge the face. The ghastly relic was then stuck on a pike and paraded under the windows of the Queen in the Temple. For four days the butchery continued. The Executive Council, aware of these sinister preparations, submissive to Danton, raised not a finger. If Danton were not directly responsible for the massacres, he, who had the power, did nothing to prevent them. He allowed them to take place; they were a warning: let the Prussians and the émigrés learn their lesson; they created a kind of terror that had its obvious uses, and terror he had already perceived was an excellent political weapon on occasions. He never denied his horrible responsibility; his shoulders, he felt, were broad enough for any burden.

On the twentieth of September the National Convention met, the very day that the half-trained volunteers under Dumouriez and Kellermann, electrified by the singing of the Marseillaise, by the first struggling consciousness of



fighting for their own liberties, for their own country, beat back the Prussians at Valmy and saved France. On the following day it was decreed that royalty should be abolished. The Republic was not officially proclaimed, but without discussion it was taken for granted that from now on all public acts should be dated "Year I of the Republic."

Pétion had been elected President of the Convention almost unanimously. That was his happy hour. Paris had sent in her favourites: Robespierre at the head of the poll; and Danton, Desmoulins, Marat, Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varenne, Tallien, Saint-Just, the Duke of Orleans, now known as Philippe-Egalité. The Girondins were here in force, among them Guadet, Roland, Buzot, Gensonné, and Vergniaud, their great orator. Isnard from Marseilles joined their group, and other admirers from the Midi. Brissot, already famous, attached himself to them, attracted by their eloquence, their brilliancy, the boldness of their ideas. This boldness, however, in general more of words than of deeds, was to pale before the terrible realism of Danton and Marat, of Robespierre and Saint-Just. The Rolands were already in relations with Pétion, with Robespierre, who, feeling his way, was glad



of the opportunities her receptions gave him, and with Buzot, the young deputy from Normandy for whom Manon Roland conceived the one romantic passion of her life. In general, the Girondins were intelligent men, lawyers, writers, with a need for cultivated society, for clever women who could not only listen but respond. They formed the habit of meeting in the salon of Madame Roland, where they found the congenial atmosphere in which to foster and mature into action their dreams and their ideals. By her hard tenacity, her will to power, Manon Roland (*"la reine Coco,"* as *Père Duchesne* called her) was, perhaps, more of a man than any of them.

## IX

THE struggle for power of the different parties in the Convention began the very day after Valmy. As provincials, the Girondins suspected and feared the despotism of Paris. They were slow in perceiving what had seemed so obvious to Marat, to Danton, and Robespierre, that terror is the easiest weapon to handle in all the revolutionary armory. How it had leapt to their hand when the enemy was on the frontier and the country in danger! Give the mob its head, and in four days your prisons are free of "aristocratic vermin" and all good patriots invigorated. The political crudity of this won no adherents among the Girondins; they dreamed of something better. But the force of the time drove them too quickly; thinking was difficult, reasoned planning impossible; they were in the current up to their necks. When the moment of the King's trial came, they would have saved his life, but they were not strong enough to hold out, and voted the death penalty along with the rest. They carried with them to the scaffold,

however, the reproach of this desire for clemency. Idealistic moderates are sure to be crushed between the two extremes: the reactionaries who never learn and who never forget, and the terrorists. Robespierre hated this brilliant and eloquent group because they had committed the crime of finding him a tedious bore. They showered him with their sarcastic comments because he seemed to them a man like other men; they could not know that he was deadly. They attacked him along with Marat and Danton, but no blow of theirs could reach him. He was not yet feared, save by the exceptionally clairvoyant, this small spare man with a face like a cat, disguising the expression of his eyes behind protective spectacles. He worked on pitilessly at the Jacobins, selecting his tools, insinuating his orders, as though whispered, at night, in a dream. Each day of these years of '92 and '93 that were to see the disappearance of the Monarchy brought him mysteriously nearer and nearer to his visioned apotheosis. The ruin and death of the Girondins were to find him smiling and content. They were to die, cursing him, but his route was made easier by their tragic disappearance. He continued to clear the way, so-called friends dropping, in one unguarded instant, into his

pigeon-hole list of foes, all to be carefully tabulated, together with the reports of his spies, in those neat wooden cases made by the Maison Duplay.

Among the leaders of the Girondins and of the Mountain, as the extremists were called because of the position of their seats in the Convention, there was too profound a difference in character, temperament, and point of view for concerted action to be possible. "Rather death than crime!" cried Vergniaud, the Girondin. "Even if our names be branded, we shall save Liberty," replied Danton. He would have reconciled the two parties in the face of danger from without, but one woman's influence with the Girondins helped to prevent this. Madame Roland detested Danton.

The Girondins could never see the men of the Mountain save spattered with blood—an optical condition that was to prove fatal to them. The Mountain controlled the Commune, the Clubs, the Committees; the Girondins in the struggle that soon began were hopelessly outclassed.

Danton, with sound political sense, attempted to find some basis for common action with the Girondins so that all factions might be united for the national defence, internal feuds at an

end. But the group rejected his offers; they would have no alliance with the men of September. Furthermore, the majority shared a personal dislike of him, kept alive by Madame Roland. They thought themselves strong enough to attack the three most prominent leaders of the Mountain—Robespierre, Marat, Danton, but their assaults, imperfectly managed, dwindled away in menaces and accusations that led nowhere. Marat and Robespierre skilfully extricated themselves, but Danton had his one painfully vulnerable point: he was unable to throw light on the disappearance of the secret funds placed in his hands; in fact, as he admitted himself, he kept no accounts. Nothing was to prevent anyone from concluding what he would. This particular accusation left its sting and Danton's position was weakened thereby. Nevertheless, the campaign against the "Triumvirs" of the Mountain, brought into being in the salon of Madame Roland, had failed. Danton, in spite of his weaknesses, had a larger view, a broader mind than his adversaries. He saw that in these miserable discussions between the factions in the Convention, the strength of the general political situation was endangered. He knew only one enemy: Europe in coalition



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against the Republic, and his whole force was bent upon raising and equipping the armies. One day, after a furious scene in the Convention, Danton turned on Guadet: "So it is war, Guadet?" Assent. "You ask for war, but it will be death." So it was to be for all of them alike.

IN order to provide a diversion, to draw off attention from those embarrassing massacres of September, and to manœuvre the Girondins into a position of hidden royalism, of anti-civism, the Mountain decided to bring in the question of the King's trial. In the sack of the Tuileries, documents had been found proving the King's complicity with émigrés; he had called in foreign aid; he was guilty of treason. Danton would have preferred to leave the situation as it was. Even now had the Girondins united with him they might have saved the King from the Jacobins, and from Robespierre in the Jacobins' shadow. But they would not. On the eleventh of December the trial began, to end in only one way: a sentence of death. On Sunday, January 21, 1793, he was driven in a coach through the silent, packed streets from the Temple to the Place de la Révolution where the guillotine had been erected. He tried to speak to the people, but the drums drowned his voice. He died with the calm courage of his race and of his faith.

Danton, ill at ease in a compromising position he could no longer control, had taken himself off, had left Paris and the stupefying farce of the King's trial and gone on mission to the victorious army of Dumouriez now in Belgium, with Custine holding the left bank of the Rhine. He had posted back to Paris to vote the death of the King. The day after the execution, in a vividly patriotic speech, he developed his vision of a triumphant France, limited only by the Rhine, the Alps, the Ocean—"... limits marked out by nature itself, and no power shall prevent us from attaining them!" Words of superb promise that disquieted the less bold of his hearers who saw an unending war with all Europe stretching before them. And indeed the Republic now faced a coalition of the great powers as a result of the execution of the King: England, Spain, and Holland had joined Austria and Prussia. In the country itself the loyal Vendée revolted. At once, in response to this desperate condition, the Convention voted measures of terrorism: in March a Revolutionary Tribunal, in April the Committee of Public Safety.

Throughout these winter months of 1793, Danton was more restless, more ruthless than ever, devoured by his nerves, excited by his posi-

tion, he who seemed now to be facing in his sole person the enemies of the Republic. He had left Paris again for the frontier. The union of Belgium with France had been voted by the Convention, and preparations were to be made for the ratification of the vote. Suddenly across his victorious excitement shot a bolt; a messenger brought in to him the news of the death of his wife Gabrielle. She had been ill when he left her, but he had scarcely noticed it, so full was he of plans, of combats, of revenge, of dreams of power.

Alone with her children in the Cour du Commerce, in the rooms now all too large and silent without the animating presence of the man to whom her whole life clung, Gabrielle had constantly in her ears the insulting cries of his enemies: "Assassin! Thief! Man of the massacres!" She shut herself up, would see no one, refused herself to the friends that, in her sick imagination, became rarer and rarer, no longer running up the stairs, invading the salon, bringing in some atmosphere of the old exciting joyous days before that horrible September.

Danton, at the news of her death, became simply a madman. That nature that knew no control burst out like a hot lava flood at the cold

challenge of the irrevocable. She was dead, but he must see her again, must hold that poor body in his arms. . . . The materialist in him quivered and refused to acknowledge the inevitable fact of dissolution. His grief had put him beside himself, he, the man of the tenth of August, of the second of September, who had used murder as a convenient weapon, he, now, for the first time staggered back before that paralyzing silence of death when it enveloped his own hearthstone.

He posted furiously to Paris, day and night, without a halt except to change horses, the tears burning his rough cheeks. At his own door he threw himself out of the carriage and rushed up the stairs. But his apartment was closed and empty; no voice, no step in reply to his desperate ringing, to his fist upon the panels of the door. The woman he had left there but a month ago would never answer to his call again. The sound of Danton's agony rang through the vacant hall, the echoing stair; he was more like a hunted wild creature than a man; excess marked him for good or ill in all his passions.

His neighbours gathered around him as he reappeared, but he could not believe that she was dead. Where was she? What had they done



with her? Gabrielle had been buried for seven days. He demanded that the body should be exhumed. When this had been done, he seized it in his arms, he, the insensate. Did he think to find Gabrielle in this malodorous fabric, in this prey of the worms? His friends, overcome with horror, put a forcible end to this macabre embrace. But Danton insisted that a mould be made of what, alas, was all that remained of the face of the woman he had passionately loved. While this was being done, he knelt, muttering unintelligible words. In the weeks that followed he was practically demented, impossible to control. Sorrow made him furious; there was no core of philosophy in the man; he suffered, therefore let others suffer. He was pitiless; let Terror come and bow proud heads. The Girondins had defied his enmity; let them taste of death and of defeat.

The war was going badly; the Vendée in revolt; nothing was playing into Danton's hand, and behind him, in the dark, his grave was being industriously dug by his friend Robespierre. For the moment, however, Danton was the chief, supreme in the work of intimidation, in stifling all opposition. It was he who fathered extraordinary measures, forced through a law of

suspects to provide human food for the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Committee of Public Safety, that instrument of Terror, was packed with Danton's friends. With this political machinery he thought to find the means of governing France. He was steadied, sobered: "Conquer the enemy, re-establish order in the interior"—such was his aim. All this common sense in those wild days savored of moderation and put a weapon into the hands of his secret detractors. Danton omnipotent was more than a disagreeable phenomenon to many of his so-called friends in the Convention.

The time had now come for the Mountain to try a fall with the Girondins. All through April and May the struggle grew daily more exasperated. As early as the end of March General Dumouriez was known to be disloyal to the Republic; when he passed over to the enemy, the Girondins were accused by Robespierre of being in complicity with him, while Marat redoubled his attacks on them in his *Ami du Peuple*. They were still strong enough to retaliate by obtaining a vote in the Convention sending Marat to the Revolutionary Tribunal to answer the charge of inciting to civil war. But this was the last gleam of an expiring political candle, the last throw of

the Girondins. And it told against them. Marat was acquitted and brought back in triumph to the Convention. Then they must have seen their doom forming itself vividly in the background. Yet they were good fighters; they would not own themselves beaten. Marat, with the help of Robespierre, harried them without mercy.

In May of 1793 they attacked again, this time the Commune, and had Hébert arrested, the *Père Duchesne* which had been shrieking for their blood, bettering, even, the Marat model. The Commune, to protect its own, organized a Committee of Insurrection, rang the tocsin and sent the National Guard, under the command of Hanriot, against the Convention, to demand the arrest of the principal Girondins. The Convention, a trifle stiffened, refused to give them up. This was the thirty-first of May. On the second of June the affair was better managed. During the night several of the Girondin leaders were arrested; Roland succeeded in escaping, but his wife was taken in his place. Hanriot now blockaded the Convention with artillery. Nerveless before such measures, the Convention decreed the exclusion of its doomed members, to be under surveillance in their homes. Among them were Vergniaud, Brissot, Buzot, Guadet,

and Barbaroux. The end of the Gironde as a political party had come. The Mountain had triumphed; and was henceforth to be the master.

To succeed when every political passion is loose, to seize and hold power of life and death, not for an intoxicating hour but for years, it is necessary to be a kind of ascetic monomaniac, to have crushed, or never to have known any of the natural human generous impulses of the soul. Such characters, more or less developed, are to be found in all revolutions, but none of the Girondins was of that ilk. They counted men among them, more or less admirable in their different gifts, mental and moral, yet each one carrying in himself the seed of failure. No one can afford to weigh and to balance, to hesitate and to compromise when he is swimming down the stained and staining flood of revolution. Mirabeau died too soon to find that out, but the others tested its truth on their own pulses, as they administered death to themselves by bullet or pinch of poison, or, captive, made their last jolting journey to the official knife.

A remnant of the Girondins succeeded in escaping from Paris and reaching Normandy with the intention of "raising the North." Some eighteen of them got to Caen, and during that

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long month of June they may have flattered themselves, with the optimism common to political idealists, that their cause was gaining converts, that the provinces would rise to the impassioned rhetoric of their manifold posters. At Caen they were fortunate enough to find administrative sympathy, and the nucleus of a counter-revolutionary army, or so they thought, judging hastily and not well.



## XI

AND at Caen lived Charlotte Corday who saw herself in her own mind destined to rid the world of Marat—not necessarily the Marat of the Mountain, the astute political opportunist; nor the Marat of his apartment in the rue des Cordeliers, the blindly adored of his mistress, of his sister; nor the secret Marat, the inner man known only to himself; but Marat the monster, more monstrous than ever was human being, because Charlotte deliberately detached him from his milieu, isolated him, conventionalized him into the classic evil-doer—black, without one impinging flicker of a half-tint.

So here are the two protagonists: Charlotte going her ways about the streets of the old provincial city in her light dress and muslin cap, or sitting still in her room, her eyes on a book; but what of Marat?

In him there were two personalities: first, the pre-revolutionary scientific man; the doctor of medicine who had studied and practised in England, the ingenious experimenter and writer on

light, on optics, on electricity, the correspondent of Benjamin Franklin, the doctor to the gentlemen bodyguard of the Count d'Artois, a Court appointment that he held from 1777 to 1786, distorted by Carlyle's picturesque imagination into that of "horse-leech" in the Count's stables. Second, there was the demagogue of the Revolution, affecting a bizarre and careless dress, a dirty handkerchief around his head, torn garments of a strange cut. Fabre d'Eglantine remarked his apparent air of uncleanness, as though it might have been assumed by the self-styled *Ami du Peuple* for popular reasons. But this was probably one symptom of a nervous disorder that was growing on him; his face and limbs twitched, all his movements were abrupt and agitated, he was said to jump rather than to walk. Charles Vatel quotes Henri Grangeneuve who, as a child, was taken to the Convention by his mother. There he saw the men of the day—"Robespierre, well-powdered, in a red or a blue coat with steel buttons, a white vest, and knee-breeches; Danton, a bull that had his fine moments, he could fascinate; Marat, a toad, he affected a slovenly dress, he was dirty, his clothes in disorder, his stockings hanging loose." The child had seen him only in the street. Marat

suffered from a skin disease that made him an object of secret disgust to his colleagues. An eczema is certainly a physical disfigurement; in Marat's case it has always seemed, perhaps unjustly, to carry a kind of moral obloquy along with it. It was in order to relieve the torment of this affliction that by 1793 he came to pass almost all his time when at home soaking himself in medicated water in a bath shaped like a shoe or *sabot*, then the common form. He sat in this contrivance on a sheet the ends of which he would draw around his naked shoulders. In front of him was a board laid across the bath to serve him as a table, and there, immobile, burning with his affliction, with his fixed ideas, with his hate, his unappeasable activity found vent in the pages of his paper, the famous *Ami du Peuple*.

In the apartment that Marat occupied in the rue des Cordeliers the little square room used as a *salle de bain* was so small that six people would overfill it. It had a brick-tiled floor and was papered with a design of twisted columns on a whitish ground. A map of France divided into departments hung on the wall, with two pistols over which was written "La Mort." And it was

to be that—death sudden and keen from a knife wound in his breast.

Curiously enough, in the copy of his paper that appeared the day of his death, Saturday, July 13, Marat, in his usual style, is violently reproaching Carra, sent as envoy to General Dumouriez in September, 1792, for not having then cut off the retreat of the "despot Guillaume" and for not having brought him prisoner to Paris. Carra had defended himself by saying that the King of Prussia had broken camp too quickly for him to be captured. "Then you should have stabbed him," Marat retorted. He goes on: "Two words to Carra: You ask for proofs, traitor, they are in your very reply. You say that you did not arrive till the 30th of September, that the next day the enemy broke camp. What did you do then? Did the Roman Consuls whom you try to imitate act in that way? Where was the dagger of Brutus?"

Where was it, in truth, but hidden in the dress of a quiet girl from Normandy?

In these two utterly dissimilar personalities there may yet be conceived to be one point of contact—their fanaticism; he, deeply stained by the massacres of September, is convinced that he is merely purging the prisons; she, a law unto

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herself, judge and executioner in one, is horrified at Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Prosecutor, when he remarks that she seems to have practised her fatal stroke, and exclaims: "The wretch! he takes me for an assassin!" And yet one can so well see Fouquier-Tinville's point of view. It is all in the personal angle; Marat and Corday are both "pures" in their different ways—one black, one white, if you will. The "pures" have a set of values peculiar to themselves, though they may suppose them to be shared by others; the lives of such are generally short for one reason or another, or if they do not die violently, they drop into neglect and obscurity when their particular phobia loses its mystic influence over the crowd.



## XII

THE arrival of the proscribed deputies at Caen, all the sudden tumult and excitement of their proclamations and their declamations—something of the feverish dangerous atmosphere of Paris entering with them into this provincial town—drew up into the light and air, full-grown, the dim project that Charlotte had been half-consciously nursing all her thinking life. She now shared in the intoxicating magic of words, of plans, vast but nebulous, the generous outcroppings of minds but imperfectly political. She was carried on the current; she burned to know these Girondins, whom she regarded as the saviours of France, as the victims of Marat, to know them, to talk with them, to share their danger and their glory. They and their ardent indignation blew steadily upon the already creeping fire in her mind. The blood of Corneille was beginning to show rose under her pallor.

The Administration at Caen had lodged the deputies in the old Hôtel de l'Intendance in the

rue des Carmes. The house still exists with its fine Louis XV façade. It is but a few moments' walk from the Old Manoir of Madame de Bretteville. Pétion says: "The building was convenient and had the great advantage of uniting us all"—he, Barbaroux, Buzot, Salle, Guadet, Louvet, and the others. Charlotte, with feminine adroitness, provided herself with a pretext for calling at the Intendance. One of her friends, the ex-canoness, Madame de Forbin, wished to protest against the suspension of her pension from the Chapter at Troyes, on the plea that she was wrongfully regarded as an émigrée, and Charlotte undertook to present the case to the Girondins and to ask their intervention with the administrators at Caen. She was accompanied on this occasion, the twentieth of June, and on subsequent visits, by an old man-servant of Madame de Bretteville. She asked for Barbaroux, the brilliant deputy of the Bouches-du-Rhône, as Madame de Forbin was known to his family. Barbaroux, florid, expansive, the so-called Antinoüs of his party, some pretty woman always at his heels—some Anna, Julia, or Zélie—was scarcely the person to attract Charlotte Corday, but she used him tranquilly to gain her end, which was all she asked. Guadet, who was

in the large salon that day with Barbaroux, saw and remarked her entry. He left them alone together.

Barbaroux told Charlotte that the papers in the Forbin case had been sent to the Ministry of the Interior in Paris. As he was a refugee and outlaw, his protection, under the circumstances, would do more harm than good, but, pressed by Charlotte, he consented to write to one of his colleagues in the Convention, Lauze de Perret, in regard to the Forbin papers. He then told Charlotte to come back in a few days to hear the result.

She must have retired well pleased—the train that was to lead to Paris and to Marat was laid. Further meetings with the Girondins followed, and, later, there was a malicious anecdote going about that Barbaroux and Charlotte spent long hours tête-à-tête in the gardens of the Intendance. Barbaroux did fleet his last few happy hours there, but the woman in the case was a feather-headed Marquise, turned republican for the sensation.

Barbaroux's letter never reached de Perret, and so the matter hung fire. Charlotte seized her moment; she announced to Barbaroux that she would go to Paris herself and see the Minister.

It was decided that she should apply first to de Perret, to whom Barbaroux would give her an introduction. In return, she offered to carry any letters and pamphlets the refugees might wish to send.

With what a suppressed tremor of her whole being must she have left Barbaroux that day! In a week her plans would be made, her face set towards Paris. Since the successful attack on the Girondins, Marat, in his *Ami du Peuple*, called unceasingly for heads, those heads in which ideas germinated dangerous to public tranquillity. To kill seems often so easy a way to an end, once you get used to the smell of blood, and probably Marat was sincere, as Robespierre was sincere—you must exterminate the miserable fools who persist in believing in their own panaceas for humanity when there is only one, and it is you who are preaching it. Just a few more heads, and terror will achieve the work of reason. Charlotte herself, with all the passion of her soul, believed that in killing Marat she would regenerate her country; he alone in his disgusting person was responsible for the bloody anarchy into which Paris was sinking. She forgot that you cannot kill an Idea; she forgot that in the shadow, behind the shoulder of Marat, stood

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Danton, that still further back, behind Danton, glimmered the pale face and peering eyes of Robespierre. The ninth Thermidor and deliverance from the nightmare of the doctrinaires was more than a year distant from that July night in 1793 when Marat ceased to be. Two days later, Charlotte, writing to Barbaroux from the Prison of the Abbaye, began her letter proudly: "Second day of the Preparation of Peace." Pathetic infatuation of the pure in heart.



### XIII

IN the week that followed her interview with Barbaroux she steadily continued her preparations. She went to see several of her friends in Caen, as though to take a last farewell of them, leaving upon their minds, however, no suspicion of her intentions. She had perfect control over her looks and words, except in one case. Eugène Defrance reports a visit Charlotte paid on the fifth or sixth of July to an old friend of the Corday family, Madame Gautier de Villiers, whom she found shelling peas with her two maids. Charlotte said that she was going on a journey and had come to say good-bye. Here for the first time she faltered and her voice broke. To cover her emotion she began to talk of indifferent things, but underneath this screen her true being was off and away to Paris. Suddenly seizing a handful of peas she crushed them in her hand and threw them on the ground. Her fixed idea: So die all tyrants! Getting up abruptly, she put her arms about her friend's neck, kissed her, and went away without another word.

On one of these visits of adieu she was seen by a young man of twenty, J. B. Renée, afterwards the father of Amédée Renée, the well-known political writer and historian of the time of Napoleon III. The elder Renée, towards the end of his life, set down his recollections of Charlotte Corday in his still unpublished memoirs. Since the closing of the convents the Abbess, Madame de Pontécoulant, and the other ladies of the Sainte-Trinité occupied a house on the Place Saint-Sauveur. Charlotte occasionally went to see them, as did young Renée, "but," says he, "I was never fortunate enough to meet her. Nevertheless she visited them the 7th or 8th of July, 1793, just at the moment when I happened to be there. She brought back some books that Madame had lent her and said she had come to bid her good-bye, as she found herself obliged to go to Paris. Madame asked her how long she would be away. 'That depends,' said she, 'upon how the business turns out that is calling me there.'" The double meaning in those simple words still strikes the reader with something of her own glacial irony when she uttered them. Renée continues: "She left Caen the 9th of July, after paying all the small debts she had made, and on the 15th we learned by

the papers that Marat had been stabbed, the 13th, in his bath by a young girl named *Corde* or *Cordé*." At first her friends refused to believe that it was she, but in a short time doubt was no longer possible. Public opinion in general praised the generous sacrifice of her life that she had made, but Madame de Pontécoulant, true to her office, was severe in her blame, and, according to Renée, "she went so far as to say that Mademoiselle de Corday died like a pagan." This epitaph would not have been displeasing to Charlotte, the lover of Plutarch. Renée made a feeble protest, citing Judith, but Madame would have nothing to do with either one or the other, and, wishing to keep no reminder of the tragic end of Charlotte, she gave to Renée, on the spot, a little drawing in colour, in a gilt frame that Charlotte had made in 1788 for Madame's fête day. "Surrounded by wreaths and garlands of roses held up by winged cupids, the design represented a row of hearts attached by cords to a much larger heart placed above them. The row of hearts was supported on a tablet in the centre of which might be read the Latin word *Corde*, at once an explanation and a signature."

There were evidently too many hearts here for Madame de Pontécoulant, the pierced one of Marat now insinuating itself in sinister fashion among the rest.

On the seventh of July, a Sunday, Charlotte was present at the review by General Wimpffen of the National Guard of Caen. At the close there was a call for volunteers to join the counter-revolutionary army at Evreux. Seventeen volunteers alone presented themselves. Decidedly Normandy was not easy to animate. But the resolution of one woman was made only the firmer by this fiasco of the General's. Then and there she set her journey for the ninth. On this Sunday afternoon she was at the Intendance, but Barbaroux had forgotten to write the promised letter to de Perret. However, it was understood that she should have it the next day. She remained to talk with several of the deputies, among them Pétion, "*le beau Pétion*," incurably *galant* in his conversation with women. He is said to have complimented Charlotte ironically as "*la belle aristocrate venue pour voir les Républicains*." Thereupon she said, proudly: "You judge me to-day without knowing me; one day you will know who I am." After the news of Marat's death reached Caen, Pétion said publicly

that in the actual state of affairs assassination was an act of national justice.

On the eighth Barbaroux sent Charlotte his letter to de Perret, together with a package of pamphlets which de Perret was to distribute in Paris, one written at Caen by J-B. Salle, *Examen critique de la Constitution*. Later, when the deputies were forced to leave Normandy in disguise to gain the Gironde, Salle, lying in hiding miserably with Pétion, Buzot, Barbaroux, Guadet in the underground galleries of Saint-Emilion, stirred his imagination with the luminous image of the woman "greater than Brutus" who had not been afraid to act and to die, and so wrote his tragedy of *Charlotte Corday*. Salle was one of the deputies named by Charlotte to Marat. Had Salle ever seen her? It is possible; there is a vague tradition in the family that Madame Salle remembered a dress Charlotte wore—a woman's unerring eye.

On the eighth Charlotte engaged her place in the diligence for the next day. On the morning of Tuesday the ninth she told Madame de Bretteville that she was going to Argentan to see her father, but in the letter that she wrote to her father she said that she was leaving for England:



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. . . I am going without seeing you because that would make me feel too badly. I am going to England because I do not believe that anyone can live much longer happy and at peace in France. On leaving I shall put this in the post for you, and when you receive it I shall have left the country. Heaven has refused us the happiness of living together, as it has refused us other gifts. It will perhaps be kinder to our country. Good-bye, dear Papa, kiss my sister for me and do not forget me.

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9 July

This done, she burned certain letters and papers, pamphlets and manifestoes of the Girondins. Her passport was in order, countersigned for Paris, giving the banal description: age twenty-four years, height five feet one inch, hair and eyebrows chestnut, eyes grey, high forehead, nose long, ordinary mouth, chin round and cleft, face oval. It is signed *Marie* Corday, the name she seems to have habitually used.

Not being a sentimentalist, she probably gave no lingering look at the old room where her "Idea" had germinated, now grown into the despot that overmastered her. She would never see again—and she knew it—the great fireplace now smeared with the blackened remnants of the papers she had burned; she would never any more look through the leaded window into the

damp court, nor go down this winding stair. The Past no longer existed for her, and the Present was fast drowning in her vision of what was to come. In her hand she carried a sketch-book and a pencil-case, for she was fond of drawing. In the court she met the young Louis Lunel, the son of the carpenter who had his shop in the part of the house that looked on the street. She knew him well and had sometimes given him pictures. He called to her and she stopped and put in his hand the sketch-book and the pencil-case: "Here is something for you. Be a good child and kiss me; you will never see me again." She bent to him and the boy kissed her and she him. He never forgot the incident and some fifty years later told it to Alphonse Esquiros. In this simple human fashion, she left her old life behind her. Nothing would seem to indicate that she had ever wished to be a mother, nevertheless she must have been conscious of an instant's hungry pleasure as Louis' soft cheek touched her own. Henceforth she was dedicated; no mere woman, but the Saviour of Society, the greater than Brutus, the avenger of the martyrs of September, the bringer of peace. Hallucinated, yet outwardly practical and calm, she walked away to take the diligence for Paris.

#### XIV

CERTAIN details of the journey she gave Barbaroux in the long letter that she wrote to him from the Prison of the Abbaye, the day after the assassination. Completely mistress of herself, yet secretly exhilarated, she must have found pleasure in this self-expression, must also have had the desire that her last days should be remembered. For the same reason she was pleased when at her trial she noticed some one sketching her, and she turned her head toward him so that he could see her better. Natural and human enough, not necessarily feminine, this longing to be perpetuated in some fashion, to live on in the minds of others when her own head had fallen untimely into the reeking basket. So she could sit, a few hours before her death, serene and fair in her cell in the Conciergerie while Hauer painted the portrait of her that is now at Versailles.

The letter to Barbaroux is headed: "The second day of the Preparation of Peace." Her fixed idea mercifully persisted that her act had

given—or was about to give—peace to her torn country; civil war was to end; such was her profound belief. In reality, in killing Marat she had deified him; other extremists were to find their way easier because of his removal, and civil war was not to end until a classic whiff of grape-shot directed by a young Corsican artillery officer gave it its quietus.

But to come back to the letter to Barbaroux. It begins in a half-joking way, astounding under the circumstances:

You wished, citizen, details of my journey, I shall not spare you the least anecdote. I was with good "montagnards" and I let them talk all they would, their remarks were as stupid as they themselves were disagreeable, and they only put me to sleep. I did not really wake up, so to speak, until we reached Paris. One of the travellers, who no doubt likes sleeping young women, took me for the daughter of an old friend of his, dowered me with a fortune I do not possess, gave me a name which I had never heard of, and finally offered me his fortune and his hand.

Then the tone changes and heightens when she thinks of Marat:

He was a furious beast, devouring the rest of France with the fire of civil war. Now, long live Peace! Thank heaven he was not born a Frenchman. [Marat was a

Swiss] . . . I believe that they are printing the last words of Marat; I doubt if he uttered any [had she not heard his call for help, *A moi, ma bonne amie, à moi!* But she had moved away into the antechamber, deaf in the first daze of her triumph, knowing that she had killed him], but these are the last he said to me. Having written all of your names and those of the administrators of Calvados who are at Evreux, he said to comfort me that in a few days he would have you all guillotined in Paris. These last words settled his fate. . . . I will not go into details about the great event; you will read of it in the papers. . . . I confess that I used deceit to lead him on to receive me; all means are good in such circumstances. On leaving Caen I counted on sacrificing him on the summit of his Mountain, but he does not go any more to the Convention. I wish I had kept your letter; they would know by that I had no accomplice; however, that will be cleared up in the end. We are such good republicans in Paris that they cannot conceive how a useless woman, who would be good for nothing no matter how long her life, could sacrifice herself with complete composure in order to save her country. . . . For two days I have been possessed inexpressibly by Peace; the happiness of my country is my own. . . . A vivid imagination and a sensitive heart promise a stormy life; I hope that those who regret me will consider that, and that they will rejoice to see me at rest in the Elysian Fields with Brutus and other men of old time. As to the moderns, there are few real patriots who know how to die for their country—almost all is egotism. What a miserable people to found a Republic!



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There she struck out the truth, but she could not face it. Immediately her invincible will asserts itself. Peace, her mystic Peace, must be founded, established, set firm, cemented with blood, even as she had cemented it. "Found the Peace," she cries to Barbaroux, "and the government will come as it can, at least it will not be the Mountain that will rule."

## XV

TWO days after leaving Caen the diligence arrived in Paris at the Messageries Nationales of the rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. It was noon on July 11. Charlotte asked an employé of the coach company if he could direct her to a decent hotel in the neighbourhood, and the man suggested the Hôtel de la Providence, giving her at the same time the printed card of the house: "Madame Grollier tient l'Hôtel de la Providence, rue des Vieux-Augustins, N° 19, près la place de la Victoire-Nationale. On y trouve des Appartements meublés à tout prix. A Paris." A commissionaire agreed to show her the way and to carry her box. At the hotel the concierge told the valet-de-chambre, Feuillard, to show her to room No. 7 on the first floor. They went up one flight of stairs to a room with a window on the street. She asked that the bed be made up at once, as she was tired and wished to rest. Instead of going to bed, however, she changed her mind, inquired of Feuillard the way to the Palais-Royal and to the rue Saint-Thomas-

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du-Louvre where de Perret lodged, and, upon getting this information, went out. Her idea must naturally have been to communicate with de Perret as soon as possible, to give him the letters and papers from the deputies at Caen, to hear what political news he had to tell her, and probably to find out from him something of Marat's habits, and how she could most swiftly get at him, de Perret, of course, remaining in ignorance of her intention.

It was about half-past one when she reached the rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre to find that de Perret was not at home. She was told, however, that he was at the Convention and would not be back until dinner time. Charlotte thereupon left the sealed packet to be given to him, saying that she would return in the evening.

All the afternoon was to pass. What more natural than that she should go back to her hotel, to the freshly made bed and to sleep?

## XVI

UNTIL 1893 the Hôtel de la Providence might still have been seen in the street once called des Vieux-Augustins, renamed after the Revolution rue Hérold. The researches of G. Lenôtre definitely established it at No. 14: a seventeenth-century building owned by the Caisse d'Epargne and used for storage. The doorway, the stairs, the handrail, the passage on the first floor, the room with the window on the street—nothing had been changed in a hundred years. To-day in the rue Hérold there are still old houses, livid and out of plumb with deep-set windows from which cautious heads might have been thrust on that July morning to note the arrival of a young woman at the hotel opposite, come in from the country by the coach, her modest box on the porter's shoulder. There must have been something arresting about her, some trick of individuality, for no one who spoke to her in those few crowded days before the end ever forgot her. This strongly built, fair, fresh woman, provincial in spite of her

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rose-coloured fichu, moved across the feverish Parisian scene like a figure from some classic play (even to the dagger hidden in her dress) but galvanized into life and intensity, into movement tigerish in its swiftness by the force of her own mind. She was a "pure," a Republican before the Revolution, as she proudly said of herself. She would gladly have acknowledged cousinship with Etienne de la Boétie, who, dying in the August of 1563, with Michel de Montaigne beside him, could wish to have been born in Venice, *because of the very name of Republic*.

When Lauze de Perret came home to dinner that evening friends were waiting for him and he had more interesting things to do than to examine the packet "on the mantelpiece in the salon" that an unknown woman had left for him. But the meal was scarcely over when Charlotte made her second appearance. She told de Perret that she wished to speak to him in private. He took her into another room where he read Barbaroux's letter. Charlotte gave him news of his Girondin friends at Caen, and then asked him to go with her to the Ministry of the Interior to get the necessary papers in the affair of her friend, Madame de Forbin. De Perret



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agreed, but it was impossible to go that night, so he arranged to call for her the next morning at her hotel. To give him the address she pulled out the card of the hotel she had received from the man at the coach office and wrote on it in pencil, *Corday*. She then took leave of the deputy, who went back to the dinner table and his friends. Charlotte had troubled him; he was moved, and resented it. He tried to shrug it off as an amusing adventure—the woman was probably an intriguer; well, he would know to-morrow, yet he felt obliged to add: "There was something in her attitude, in her face, something that seemed to me singular." There was.

The next morning, Friday, July 12, de Perret went with Charlotte to the Ministry of the Interior, but they were unable to see the Minister. A clerk advised them to come back at eight o'clock that evening. According to de Perret, as they returned to the rue des Vieux-Augustins, Charlotte gave him certain details concerning the hopes and plans of the Girondins at Caen. From what she said, from her manner of saying it, from the whole spirit of the woman alive in her face and voice, de Perret realized that he was not dealing with an intriguer but with "une bonne citoyenne." She had gained his sym-

pathy, so much so that, later in the same day when he discovered that he himself was suspected of being in communication with the outlawed deputies and that the Convention had ordered seals to be affixed to his effects, he went at once to Charlotte to warn her that now he would be more of a hindrance than a help to her in the Forbin affair. As that was but a blind, Charlotte let it drop, but when de Perret asked her when she was returning to Caen, so that he might give her letters for the Girondins, she replied evasively. Never, she knew, would she make that leisurely journey again through the golden summer country. But she was solicitous to save de Perret, if possible, from any suspicion of being her accomplice. She begged him not to come to see her the next day, for she knew what work would be going forward, and how grimly her own hand would be engaged. His news showed her that Marat's faction was still relentlessly hunting down the Girondins and their friends—so be it. As de Perret took his leave, she, with the foreknowledge of her own purpose instructing her, urged him not to go again to the Convention; his time for doing good there was over. Why should he not join his colleagues at Caen? De Perret replied that his post was in Paris, he

could not desert it. Her answer was to lower her voice—they were at the door—"Once more I beg of you, go, go, leave before to-morrow night!" Supreme appeal. How it must have come over her with absolute certainty that to-morrow night anyone who had spoken to her in Paris, anyone who had touched her hand in friendship, might find himself in prison, within a step of the guillotine. As to herself, it is known that she believed the maddened crowd would tear her to pieces, once her tragic gesture was made.

Yet with that horror haunting her mind she was of such a temper that she could quietly follow her fixed idea, arousing no suspicion by anything she said or did, imperturbable, calm. But even her iron nerves demanded some outlet, some relief. Nearer and nearer came the morrow; de Perret had gone; she was alone with her thoughts. Then it was that she sent the valet-de-chambre, Feuillard, to get her some paper and pens. When he brought them back he had the curiosity to ask her what was happening in Caen. She spoke of the insurrection there, and then questioned him as to what they thought of Marat in Paris. Feuillard replied with conviction, or merely with prudence, that they con-

sidered him a good citizen. There was no more to be said; Feuillard took himself off, and Charlotte sat down at the writing-table that was in her room, her creeping inner excitement spending itself in the composition of an impassioned manifesto, with the title written at the head: *Adresse aux Français, amis des lois et de la paix*. This paper was found pinned to her bodice after her arrest.

. . . O Frenchmen, but a little while and there will be nothing left of you but the memory of your existence! . . . O my country! Your misfortunes tear my heart; I can give you nothing but my life, and I thank heaven I am free to dispose of it as I will. No one will be the loser by my death. . . . I wish that my last breath might be of use to my fellow citizens, that my head, carried through Paris, might be a signal to rally all the friends of justice, that the wavering Mountain might see its doom written in my blood, that I might be their last victim, and that the universe, avenged, might declare that I have deserved well of humanity. If my conduct be viewed otherwise, that troubles me but little. . . . My relatives and friends ought not to be disturbed; no one knew of my plans. I join my certificate of baptism to this address to show what the weakest hand can do, guided by complete self-devotion. If I do not succeed in my enterprise, my countrymen, I have shown you the way; you know your enemies. Arise, march, and strike!

Before the night of the twelfth came, she had tried to find out, probably from Madame Grollier in the office of the hotel, what Marat's habits were. Did he go to the Convention? She was told that Marat was ill and rarely went out. He wrote and managed his paper, *L'Ami du Peuple*, from his home. So much was settled; she would find him there.

On that determination she went back to her room. That room, No. 7 of the Hôtel de la Providence, continued for who knows how long to receive the indifferent guest. As a room, unchanged, it persisted for a hundred years from the July night when Charlotte Corday slept in it for the last time. It is strange that in such places, where once a powerful spirit exercised itself, no faintest vibration of its passing reaches the ordinary occupants of to-day, no signal from the "other side of the wall" disturbs their dull complacency.

Her last night of personal freedom, that she might have imaginatively styled to herself the Eve of the Preparation of Peace, passed quietly away, and at six o'clock on the morning of Saturday, July 13, she left the hotel. She had brought her country ways to town and no doubt thought to find everyone astir at that hour. She



asked her way to the Palais-Royal. On reaching there she discovered that all the shops were still closed. She walked about to pass the time, through the gardens with their rows of trees, fresh and cool in the morning air, up and down the long arcades where Philippe-Egalité, for his own popularity-hunting purposes, had permitted the opening of shops. They are there to this day, practically unchanged, and if a solitary promenader were to stroll in from the rue de Valois to see the declining sun striking the old stucco and the columns, as it did in '93, he would now find all deserted, twilight coming on, where once there was such a rout, no ghosts even of Egalité, equivocal yet seductive, of Madame de Genlis and the mysterious Pamela, of Desmoulins and Corday—all fled away together into the shades. But now to this quiet back-water few come—gone the crowds of the revolutionary time when here was the favourite meeting-place to eat, to game, to dance, to talk—particularly to talk—interminably, burningly, but sometimes to deadly purpose, as on that other summer day—the July sun inflaming men's heads and hearts—when Camille Desmoulins, young, ardent, trembling with the new intoxication of the old mirage of Liberty, sprang on a

chair in the gardens and maddened those who heard him: "To arms! Plunder the Arsenal! Down with the Bastille! Down with —!" On he raved. Secretly, in most hearts, the electric response then given was to something in their depths that had but the vaguest relation to the actual Bastille. "Down with —!" and let the blank be filled with whatever is to restrain their individual license—license so easily disguised and made respectable as Liberty. But a crowd is often *bon garçon* if you take it on its sentimental side, as Camille did, and this one was presently tearing the bright leaves from the trees, because "green is the colour of hope," then streaming away with the impetus that was finally to leave not one stone of the Bastille upon another.

To-day Camille Desmoulins, with less than a year to live, was busy with his own affairs in another quarter of Paris, while Charlotte Corday, with barely four more days to live, was calmly sauntering about the arcades of the Palais-Royal in the summer morning.

Between seven and eight o'clock the shops must have begun slowly to open. There was a cutler at No. 177 (the numbers of these shops have never been changed). Charlotte entered

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and bought for two francs a large kitchen knife. It was in a case of thick paper made to look like shagreen. She slipped this inside her bodice. She then walked back to the Place des Victoires, where there was a stand of hackney coaches. She went up to one of them and told the coachman to take her to the house of Marat. He replied that he didn't know where he lived. "Find out," was her response. He did so, asking his fellow-drivers, then, mounting his seat, he drove off with his fare.

## XVII

MARAT lived across the river, in the quarter of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, in the rue des Cordeliers. He had an apartment, up one flight of stairs, in a large seventeenth-century house, let out in that fashion. An archway between two shops led into a small, dull courtyard with a well at one side of it; on the right, the broad stone staircase with its balustrade of wrought iron. At the door of Marat's apartment on the first landing hung an iron chain with a handle to be used as a bell-pull. On entering the visitor found himself in a darkish antechamber, on the left of which was the kitchen, on the right the dining-room lighted from the court, then a small cabinet, beyond that the little room with a tiled floor that Marat used for his bath. In front, on the street, was a salon and a bedchamber, the latter opening into the bathroom. A fragment, says G. Lenôtre, of the red, white, and blue paper with which the bedroom was patriotically hung is still preserved in a private collection.

This house was not destroyed until 1876, when the modern Boulevard Saint-Germain was cut through this quarter. Georges Cain gives a vivacious account of a conversation that he had with the dramatist, Victorien Sardou, who, passionately interested in souvenirs of the Revolution, pointed out to Cain on the present Place de l'Ecole de Médecine the exact spot where Marat's house door opened. Not far away, about where the statue of Danton now stands, was the entrance to the Cour du Commerce in which Danton had his lodgings. The Boulevard Saint-Germain swept away that part of the Cour, but a remnant of it may still be seen, masked by a modern apartment house. A step or two under an archway and you are on the cobbled street that might have heard the rattle of the pikes of the section on the night Danton was arrested. Here are still the low one-story shops, with dormers above, in one of which the widow of Brissot, the Girondin leader, opened a book-shop and reading-room. Next door was the printer who got out *L'Ami du Peuple*. Marat, himself, when he was well enough, must often have hurried with that quick, convulsive step of his into this Passage, raging about printer's delays, or proof corrections, or whatever was



occupying his feverish brain at the moment. His dress was notably slovenly and eccentric, so perhaps the Passage saw his extraordinary dressing gown famous, in its day, "with revers imitating panther skin."

But for some time Marat had been ill, his eczema torturing him so that he could get no relief save in his medicinal bath. He passed long hours in the gloomy little room where his *sabot* had been installed, whatever light there was to be had coming in from the court. He wrote his articles for his paper here, a board across the bath serving as a table. Here he received his followers and henchmen, gave his orders, and kept the threads of his numerous affairs in his own hands. Certain work in connection with the paper was done in the apartment, such as folding the sheets. Supplies of paper were also stored here. Simonne Evrard, the woman in whose name the apartment was rented, had been Marat's constant and faithful companion since 1790, or perhaps earlier. She was passionately devoted to him, blindly believed in him as a great man, and all her little savings had gone to help found his paper. To her alone he showed the sentimental rift in the dark rock of his nature. He liked women about him, the atmos-

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phere of them. The apartment buzzed with them, all devoted, all eager to serve. There was Simonne's sister, Catherine Evrard, and Albertine, the sister of Marat. What kept these three disparate and possibly jealous natures from friction was the common worship of their god, the man Marat, who, such is the power of the point of view, was veritably to them the supreme Patriot, noble and generous, giving his life for the regeneration of France. The household was completed by the cook and maid of all work, Jeannette, and in and out of the apartment, lending a hand when necessary, bustled the concierge, Marie-Barbe.

## XVIII

**I**T was about nine o'clock in the morning when Charlotte Corday, driving from the Place des Victoires, reached her goal in the rue des Cordeliers. Getting out of the coach she went in the archway and spoke to the concierge, asking her on what floor Marat lived and whether he was in. The woman replied that Marat lived on the first floor, on the street, but that he was ill and that she had her orders not to let anyone go up. No thoroughfare. This difficulty in reaching Marat must have irritated Charlotte merely; she was far beyond discouragement. Her plan had so deeply entwined itself in her mind that by now it had acquired almost objective reality. She knew that she and Marat would soon be face to face.

An hour later she made her second attempt. She came in quickly, the concierge was either not at her post, or did not see her; she walked up the stairs and stood before Marat's door. She pulled the bell, and the jangle might well have sounded in her ears as floodingly as the trump of the

Last Judgment. Jeannette opened the door to a young and well-dressed woman, strongly built, fresh and fair, who asked if she might see the citizen Marat, as she had some "very interesting and urgent things" to say to him. At the sound of her voice Simonne Evrard came forward to find out what this unusual caller wanted. Charlotte repeated her request, only to be met with the same refrain of refusal: Marat was ill; he could see no one. Charlotte insisted, urged, begged, but Simonne was adamant, the looks of the young lady perhaps disturbed her. There was nothing to do but to leave. Before going, however, the visitor asked Simonne if she thought the citizen Marat could be seen in two or three days. Simonne, out of patience, said she didn't know when he could be seen, impossible to give a day, impossible to know when Marat would be well enough to see anyone; it would be useless to return. On this a closed door.

Charlotte did not stand on the landing, baffled, furious, with her useless hidden knife, for her unnatural self-control so locked her nerves into an hypnotic sleep that she could walk quietly down the stairs again, as any ordinary person might do, and drive back to the hotel.

On reaching her room, in the dim coolness after the heat and noise of the streets, she wrote a brief note to Marat which she sent out to be put in the post. In it she said that she had come from Caen, and would be able to tell him of the plotting going on there. She would await his reply.

The long hot sunny afternoon was to be lived through, for she had determined to make a final attempt to see Marat that evening, by which time he would have received her note. In fact, he did receive it and read it about seven-thirty, just as she herself again mounted the stairs to his apartment.

She did not leave her room in the hotel all that afternoon; she did not ring or call; all was quiet and composed. Toward six o'clock she had a hairdresser near by come in to arrange her hair, giving it a touch of powder. She then changed the gown she had worn in the morning for a thinner one, for she felt the heat. She now wore a *déshabillé* of spotted stuff, on her dressed head she put a hat with a high crown, trimmed with a black cockade and three green cords; the knife lay hidden in her breast; she held a fan in her hand. She had prepared a second note to Marat to be carried in to him in case the first had not



aroused his curiosity, or his ferocity, sufficiently for him to wish to see her; yet news from Caen, where the Girondins were still plotting against the sacred Mountain, might be supposed a tempting bait. In this she said:

I wrote to you this morning, Marat, did you receive my letter? May I hope to have a moment's interview? If you have not received the letter, I hope you will not refuse to give me the interview, seeing how interesting the matter is. To be an unfortunate, as I am, is sufficient to have a claim on your protection.

She did not sign this second note, and Marat never read it.

She now finds herself once more in front of the door on the first floor landing. She has come in unchallenged, the concierge not being below. She rings, and one of the women of the household opens the door—Jeannette, or the concierge, Marie-Barbe, who is in the ante-chamber, folding copies of *L'Ami du Peuple*. Charlotte pushes her way in, and here in the dark little entry a wordy discussion goes on between her and Marie-Barbe, who, well-trained in the ways of the house, repeats in the words of the morning that Marat is not to be seen, that he will not receive a stranger. At this moment

a young man named Pillet appears. He has a bill to present to Marat. With him is Laurent Bas, a commissionaire who generally has his station on the corner of the rue des Cordeliers, and who is in the habit of running errands for Marat in connection with the journal. He is now carrying a consignment of paper for use in the printing of *L'Ami du Peuple*. Pillet is passed in to see Marat, who is in his bath in the room beyond the dining-room and cabinet. While he is looking over the bill he asks Pillet to open the window a little, probably to get more light. This done, he approves the bill, returns it, and Pillet retires. As he goes out he must pass Charlotte, an unusual apparition here, this carefully dressed young lady, a fan in her gloved hand. She is still insisting vehemently to Marie-Barbe that the citizen Marat should receive her; she can give him important news from Caen. Hearing the altercation, Simonne comes into the ante-chamber and recognizes the visitor of the morning. Either she now consents to ask Marat if he will see the young woman, or Marat himself calls Simonne to find out what the noise of voices in the entry means. At all events Simonne goes into the *salle de bain* and presumably gives Marat

some account of Charlotte, for she comes out almost at once and tells the latter that Marat will receive her after all.

In that instant what a stony calm must have descended on Charlotte, freezing all the common so-called womanly impulses at their source, weakening any doubts as to the right to take human life. This Marat, worshipped by the People to whom he throws the heads of aristocrats as a daily reminder that Liberty is safe with him; secretly hated because feared by Danton, by Robespierre; adored and exalted by Simonne and Albertine, because to them alone he shows some gleams of the soul that crouches in that diseased and repulsive body; this Marat, to Charlotte Corday, is no better than a mad dog, slobbering and snapping, injecting his rabies into the generous veins of France. To kill him is a duty and a privilege.

Simonne, without direct suspicion of danger, yet vaguely disturbed, involves herself unconsciously in the cruel irony that human actions occasionally take on by leading Charlotte to the room where *L'Ami du Peuple* sits in his bath, the ends of a sheet pulled up over his bare shoulders. She opens the door. Charlotte goes in and closes it behind her.

## XIX

SHE must have looked at the strange and unpleasant person in his *sabot* with all the light of her purpose extinguished in her eyes, with nothing in her manner to put him on the alert. He, feverish and ill, was still bent, with a kind of satanic courage (as the papers under his hand showed) upon propagating his peculiar brand of patriotism, upon advancing his own political ideas by the systematic suppression of those of others. It is not surprising, everything considered, that Charlotte should have had no conception of that other Marat, the savant, the scientific worker, the author of admirable memoirs on certain delicate problems of optics, on electrotherapeutics, containing suggestions of an originality far ahead of his time. No, she saw nothing but the anarchist, the preacher of civil war, promising the rabble of Paris that if they would continue to support their *Ami* as they had heretofore done, he, ill and suffering as he was, would yet see to it that the course of the wicked from life to death should be made as brief as possible.



With his tired head tied up in a vinegar-soaked handkerchief, with his wild dark eyes on the quiet face of this elegantly dressed young woman, Marat may, at the end of this long hot afternoon, have felt a spurt of interest, of imaginative animation, of curiosity to hear what this agreeable person had to tell him of the renegades, the despised outlaws in Normandy.

He motions her to a seat—the chair placed beside the bath. She takes it, her back to the window. He at once begins to question her about the deputies at Caen. She tells him what will excite his malice: that the deputies have succeeded in raising the departments of the North, that the citizens are enrolling to march on Paris and rescue the Girondin prisoners, that an army is already at Evreux, that—but what did any of it matter now? She was there in the room with him at last. She talked on in order to drown him in his blood-thirsty dream; she talked on because a witness was present. Simonne Evrard had come back to the bathroom almost at once, guided perhaps by some subconscious warning, some uneasiness not formulated; instinct at work, or merely the jealousy of the woman-creature at the sight of another woman, young, pretty, aristocratic? As



an excuse for the interruption, she carried a carafe of water in which certain quantities of almond paste and clay were mixed. This extraordinary drink had been recommended to Marat for his ailments, or perhaps he had invented it for himself. Simonne inquired if she had not put in too much of the clay. Marat replied that there was not too much, but she might take out a small piece if she wished. Simonne, her manufactured question answered, had no longer any excuse for lingering. She turned to go, leaving Charlotte calmly seated in the chair. Before she reached the door, however, her eye was caught by two plates on the window sill on which were sweetbreads and brains intended for supper. Removing these from their improvised larder, she took them away with her and closed the door. The two protagonists were once more alone and face to face.

Charlotte must have realised that she had no time to spare; there were too many people in the apartment; too many ferreting eyes and indiscreet tongues. She rose; the interview was over; she had gorged Marat with the names of the men she honoured and trusted; he was scribbling them down, bending over his board.

At last he stopped, raised his head: "Good," he exclaimed, "we'll soon have them all guillotined in Paris!"

With those words death took him. Charlotte had seized her knife and in one straight unflinching blow, with all the power of her virgin soul behind it, had struck deep into the livid naked breast so near her own. He cried out chokingly: "*A moi, ma bonne amie, à moi!*" He died almost instantly. Charlotte Corday's work was done.

Blood was everywhere, flowing from the knife wound in a great clot, staining the papers and journals on the writing-board, meandering in a languid little stream across the tiles of the floor, turning them redder, curling at last into a small dark pool before the door of the bedroom.

Upon hearing the hoarse, sobbing cry of Marat, Simonne, her suspicions turning to hideous certainty, flew to him. There was indescribable confusion, the four women—Simonne, Catherine, Marie-Barbe, Jeannette—shrieking, beside themselves. Charlotte took advantage of their momentary blind grief to reach the ante-chamber, but there she encountered the commissioner, Laurent Bas, who had stayed behind

with the paper after Pillet had left the apartment. As he threw himself upon her, she defended herself instinctively. Marie-Barbe came to his aid; he seized a chair and struck Charlotte with it; she fell. Meanwhile the cries and shrieks of "Help! Assassin! Assassin!" were ringing through the old house, its windows open for the evening air. Simonne, half-mad with terror and despair, hung over Marat, trying to stop the flow of blood with her bare hand. In a few moments the apartment was full of people. The first person to enter was a neighbour living in the same house, a surgeon-dentist named Lafondée. As he rushed in he saw Laurent Bas striking a woman who was lying on the floor. Without stopping he reached the bathroom, demanded linen, made a compress, and bound it over the gaping wound in Marat's breast. He bent over him, listened, felt his pulse, but *L'Ami du Peuple* had retreated to the shades. . . . It is only an inert body that they take out of the *sabot* from which the dark water now streams, fouling whatever it touches. Blood is over everything, tracked from the stifling bathroom over all the apartment, bloody hands touching the woodwork, bloody fingers fumbling

with the curtains, with the white bed wherein they lay the body of Marat.

Marie-Barbe runs downstairs to fetch a doctor from the school of surgery near by. She is the first one to spread the news of the assassination in the street. A crowd immediately gathers, the word flying from mouth to mouth, people streaming in from all the adjacent streets—Hautefeuille, de l'Observance, de Touraine, du Paon—all the neighbourhood seething now, furious at the loss of their defender and preserver, the street soon black in the twilight with a compact mass of heads. They surround the hackney-coach, still standing before the door, in which Charlotte had driven over to the rue des Cordeliers. The crowd questions the coachman, who, finding himself suddenly important, the centre of interest, tells everyone that "the assassin of Marat is a woman, an elegant young girl, an aristocrat."

A dull murmur, disquieting, menacing, runs through the throng, as eyes are lifted to rivet themselves on the windows of that bedroom on the first floor where a light now begins to flicker. The doctor has come, Pelletan, chief-surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu. He can do no more than be official about the death, about the cause of it,



this knife wound. So bold and sure had been the stroke that the knife, penetrating deeply between the first and second ribs had perforated the aorta and death had been practically instantaneous.

It is not long before the Commissioner of Police arrives, together with a number of the National Guard. They open a way to the house, and the Commissioner goes up to Marat's apartment. In the antechamber he sees two men holding a woman by the wrists. He goes on into the bedroom where Marat lies, convulsed, not calmed by death. He is given particulars of the assassination, he sees the knife, he sees (with what amazement we may conceive) the assassin, this young woman, quiet and composed, who stands in the midst of blood and confusion, oblivious of the rough grasp upon her wrists, sunken in her heroic dream, as though some impalpable veil enveloped her, cutting her off from contact with Marat's world, blunting in its meshes all expressions of violence and hatred directed against her, keeping her inviolate. Intensely concentrated on herself, triumphant in all the fibres of her heart that her deed was accomplished and the tyrant forever cut off from his tyranny, she could astound all those who saw her by the



perfection of her calm. The strangeness of it shocked them into a kind of respect; as courtesy was understood in those days of '93, she might almost be said to have been treated with it; certainly, after the first blow, there was none of the violence that might have been looked for.

In the report of the Commissioner of Police he describes how he saw in the dark antechamber a number of armed men and a woman whom they guarded who was said to have stabbed Marat with a knife. He looked into a little room where there was a bath, and a great quantity of blood on the floor, and the water in the bath was all coloured with the blood of the said Marat. He next went into the bedroom looking on the street by two casement windows with Bohemian glass in them. At the left of the door, on the bed, he saw stretched out the body of the citizen Marat, assassinated by a knife wound. By the side of the body was the citizen Philippe-Jean Pelletan, consulting surgeon for the armies of the Republic, member of the Sanitary Council, who lived in the rue de Touraine.

The nature of the wound was explained by Pelletan. The Commissioner, in his turn, examined the body of the dead man. He then looked at a knife with a handle of ebony, the

blade of which, newly sharpened, was stained with blood, the instrument that had killed Marat. This examination over, he returned to the ante-chamber where he ordered Charlotte to be taken into the salon, with its two windows on the rue des Cordeliers. He then proceeded to examine her in the presence of the citizens Marino and Louvet, representing the police of the Mairie, who had just arrived on the scene.

In reply to questions, Charlotte said her name was Marie-Anne-Charlotte Corday, *ci-devant* d'Armont, twenty-five years old, less fifteen days, living on her income, ordinarily at Caen but recently lodging in Paris, rue des Vieux-Augustins, Hôtel de la Providence. Asked how long she had been in Paris and what had been the object of her visit, she replied: that she had arrived Thursday last with a passport that she had obtained at Caen, and that she had come with no particular object.

Asked whether it was true that she had assassinated Marat with the knife that was then shown to her, she replied that she had and that she recognized the knife.

Asked what had caused her to commit the crime, she replied that she had seen civil war on the point of breaking out in France, and as she

was convinced that Marat was the principal cause of that disaster, she had preferred to make the sacrifice of her own life to save her country.

As it did not appear natural that she had conceived this abominable design of her own free will, being asked to tell the names of the persons she most frequented at Caen, she replied that she had spoken to no living soul of her purpose; that she had had her passport for some time; on leaving Caen last Tuesday she had told the elderly relative with whom she lived (the citizenne Coutelier de Bretteville, a widow over sixty years old) that she was going to see her father; very few people frequented the house, and no one had ever known anything of her purpose.

Upon observing that, according to her own words, everything pointed to the fact that in leaving Caen she had done so with the sole design of assassinating the citizen Marat, she replied that it was true that she had that design and that she would never have left Caen had she not had the desire to accomplish it.

Asked to declare where she had procured the knife with which she had committed the murder, who were the persons she had seen in Paris,

and, finally, what she had done in Paris since the Thursday of her arrival, she replied that she had bought the knife with which she had assassinated Marat that morning at eight o'clock, in the Palais-Royal and that she had paid forty sous for it; that she knew no one in Paris where she had never been before, that on arriving Thursday, toward noon, she had gone to bed and had not left her room till Friday morning when she went out to walk toward the Place des Victoires and in the Palais-Royal; that she did not go out in the afternoon but wrote the different papers that would be found on her; that she went out this morning, was in the Palais-Royal between seven-thirty and eight o'clock; that there she bought the knife; that she took a coach in the Place des Victoires to go to the house of Marat; that she was refused admittance; that she then returned to the hotel, and decided to write to him, demanding an interview on a false pretext. She said that about half-past seven in the evening she took a coach to go to Marat's house to receive the reply to her letter; fearing a refusal, she had taken the precaution to write another letter which was in her pocketbook and which she was going to attempt to send in to Marat, but she had not used it, he having received her,



and, finally, she said that her plan had not been an ordinary one.

Asked how, this second time, she had succeeded in seeing the citizen Marat, and how she had committed the crime, she replied that the women had opened the door, but had refused to let her see Marat, but that he, having heard her insisting, had himself told them to bring her into the bathroom, that he had asked her several questions about the deputies at present at Caen, their names, and those of the Municipal officials; she had given them to him, and that Marat having said that it would not be long before they were guillotined, she had then drawn out the knife that she carried in her breast, with which she struck the said Marat in his bath.

Asked if, after committing the crime, she had not tried to escape by the window, she replied that she had made no attempt to escape by the window, but that she would have gone out by the door, if she had not been prevented.

Charlotte was then searched and in her pockets were found: a sum of money in specie and in assignats; a silver thimble; the letter addressed to Marat of which she had spoken; a passport delivered by the Municipality of Caen the eighth of April, and viséed the thirteenth of the same



month, a gold watch made by Dubosq of Caen; a trunk key and a ball of white cotton. In her bosom was found a case of imitation leather—the sheath of the knife. In addition were found two papers pinned together, one her certificate of baptism, and the other her Address to the French People.

During the interrogation officials of the Convention had been arriving, members of the different Committees, pressing into the small apartment, now stifling and malodorous, elbowing their way through the crowd of onlookers into the salon where, in the candlelight, Charlotte faced them and their questions, making her replies without a tremor of emotion. It was only when she saw the disorder of her dress, probably at the moment of the search, that she became troubled. Half turning, she begged them to untie her hands, so that she might rearrange her bodice and fichu. When this was done, she drew down her sleeves over her bruised wrists and put on her gloves, before her hands were again bound. According to Harmand de la Meuse, her composure and her self-control profoundly impressed the men, hardened and cynical, who saw and heard her.

It was past midnight when she was taken into

the bedchamber to be confronted with the body of Marat. Simonne was weeping by the side of the bed; the gaping wound was exposed. It was horrible. Charlotte, to put an end to the scene, cried out: "Yes, yes, I killed him!" Then she turned and went quickly back into the salon, where the guards were waiting to take her to the Prison of the Abbaye, the nearest one to the rue des Cordeliers.

Surrounded by men, she walked down the stairs that, a few hours before, she had mounted with her easy step, in her light summer dress, free, responsible for her actions, mistress of her fate. Without a thought for her personal happiness, for the dignity of a normal life, obscure yet safe in some lost corner of her province, she had centred every pulse of her being on this act for which she was about to die. She had nursed it secretly, draped it in the colours of her generous imagination, transfigured it into a mystic deed that only a virgin could accomplish. She had dedicated herself; a woman compassionate, she was yet wholly herself when she stooped over Marat, the knife in her hand: she was the avenging angel.

It is easy to see how her legend imposed itself; this Norman girl who had come down into

the City of Perdition to inaugurate the Era of Peace. Irony of so many human actions that her great achievement should have dwindled on her hands to a vulgar and useless murder. But she was to pass off the scene before this consciousness could poison her triumph. She was still at ease and satisfied; she was content. Witnesses of this night were not lacking to affirm it, to their own stupefaction.

The great courtyard door opened, and in the midst of a dark group a woman appeared, pale, with her arms tied behind her back. The murderess at last! An immense sullen roar went up from the crowd massed in the street, swaying about the coach, still standing before the house like an island in an uneasy river of heads. Furious menaces, threats of death, distorted faces, clutching, threatening hands—all this she met with silence, nerving herself for the worst. She thought the people were going to tear her in pieces. She was almost unconscious when her guards got her into the coach, and the slow progress to the Prison began. It was two o'clock in the morning before they reached it.

SHE was put into the miserable cell that had previously been occupied by Madame Roland and by the Girondin Brissot. As was to be the case a month or so later with the Queen, Charlotte was guarded at night as well as during the day by two gendarmes. She protested, but no attention was paid to her complaint. With the astonishing detachment that women can sometimes call into being, Charlotte (like Madame Roland in captivity filling note-books with her memoirs) composed herself to write the long letter to Barbaroux from which extracts have already been made. She also freshened up as well as she could the clothes that she wore, for she knew that her trial would take place without delay. The Convention had given over her case to the Public Prosecutor, the dreaded Fouquier-Tinville. Either here in the Abbaye, or later, when she was transferred to the Conciergerie, she made for herself one of those pretty headdresses, the linen cap that Normandy women wore. In this she was painted

by Hauer just before her execution. The clothes that she had brought with her from Caen—the striped *négligé*, the petticoat of pink silk, her chemises, her stockings, one pair of white, one of grey; the little linen *peignoir* without sleeves, the white linen handkerchiefs, the two linen caps, the *fichus*, two of linen, one of green gauze, one of silk with a red border, and the little packet of ribbons of different colours—all this had been gathered together from the chest of drawers and the *armoire* in room No. 7 of the *Hôtel de la Providence*, and handed over to the police. The address of Lauze de Perret had been found during the search of the room, written on a morsel of paper. Madame Grollier had also testified to having seen him at the hotel. He was now under arrest, together with another Girondin, Fauchet, who had never seen Charlotte Corday in his life.

On July 15 she wrote a curious little letter to the Committee, asking that her picture might be painted, as a *souvenir* for her friends. “Furthermore,” she goes on, with an agreeable point of irony, “while the likeness of good citizens is always cherished, there is sometimes a curiosity about that of great criminals, and this serves to perpetuate the horror of their crimes. If you



deign to pay attention to my request, I beg of you to send to me to-morrow a miniature painter." The note is signed: Marie Corday.

The next day, the sixteenth, in the morning, the order was given to transfer her to the Conciergerie, that customary antechamber to the guillotine. Upon arrival there she was taken into one of the courtrooms of the Palais de Justice to be examined by Montané, President of the Criminal Tribunal.

This time there was no equivocation; she admitted that the object of her journey to Paris had been to kill Marat. His crimes—the desolation of France, the civil war that he had set alight throughout the whole country—had been the motive of her act. It was he who had caused the massacres of September, he who had desired civil war in order to have himself made Dictator. She answered questions freely regarding her visits to de Perret. She told how, on Saturday morning, she had walked in the gardens of the Palais-Royal; that she had bought a table knife in a case, with a black handle, of ordinary size, for forty sous. She admitted that she had bought it to kill Marat. She described her attempts to see Marat, and the letter she sent him. She denied that she had visited the National Conven-

tion, adding that she did not even know where it was. She told how she had at last been admitted to Marat's apartment on Saturday evening; what she had said to him, and he to her; how he had noted down the names of the deputies at Caen, and how he had declared that he would soon have them all guillotined at Paris. It was then that she had killed him. Upon the comment being made that such an atrocious act could not have been committed by a woman of her age, without her having been incited to it in some way, she replied that she had never spoken to anyone of her plans; that she did not consider that she had killed a man but a savage beast that was devouring all France. On being pressed further to say whether she had not been incited to commit the crime by Barbaroux, de Perret, and others, she remarked that such a question showed little knowledge of the human heart, that it was much easier to execute such a design because of your own hatred, than because of that of others. She then drew out from her pocket the letter she had written to Barbaroux, and asked permission to finish it and to send it. She explained that he had asked her to give him details of her journey to Paris, but he was ignorant of her motive in making it. She confessed

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that after the assassination of Marat she believed that she would herself be massacred by the people, and for that reason she had written out her motives for the act in the Address that was found on her, and that she wished it to be known after her death.

The notes of the above examination were read over to the prisoner. She declared that she had nothing to alter in her answers and thereupon signed the paper: Corday.

## XXI

AFTER these formalities, she was taken back to the Abbaye, only to be removed again the same day by order of Fouquier-Tinville and definitely placed in the Conciergerie. Her time was growing short; she could count on but one more day. Richard, the concierge, and his wife, who were later to show a blamable humanity to the imprisoned Marie-Antoinette, received Charlotte Corday not unkindly, and made haste to supply her with writing materials, her first request on entering her cell. She had no inclination to sleep; she knew that she could draw upon enough nervous force to support her through the hours of the morrow, did she but will it, and now, to-night, there was only the intense desire to express herself, to let her written words flow from her, easing the hidden pressure in her brain, as surely as though she were back again in Caen, letting the current of informal talk carry her where it would. She is finishing her long letter to Barbaroux:

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They have transferred me to the Conciergerie, and these gentlemen of the Grand Jury have promised to send you my letter. I therefore continue. I have gone through a long examination; get a copy of it if it is made public. . . . I had the idea yesterday evening to make a present of my portrait to the department of Calvados, but the Committee of Public Safety of whom I asked permission have not replied, and now it is too late. I beg of you, citizen, to communicate this letter to the citizen Bougon, attorney-general of the department; I do not write to him for many reasons. First, I am not sure that he would be at Evreux now; furthermore, I am afraid that, being naturally sensitive, he would be pained at my death. However, I believe that he is a good enough citizen to console himself with the hope of peace. I know how much he wished for it, and I trust that in bringing it nearer I have fulfilled his hopes. If other friends ask to read this letter, please refuse no one. I must be defended at the trial; it is the rule. I have chosen as counsel Gustave Doulcet of the Mountain. I imagine that he will refuse the honour; it would scarcely give him anything to do. I had thought of asking for Robespierre or Chabot. I shall ask to be allowed to dispose of the remainder of my money to offer it to the wives and children of the brave citizens of Caen who volunteered for the deliverance of Paris. It is astonishing that the people let me be taken from the Abbaye to the Conciergerie. That is a new proof of their moderation. Tell that to the good people of Caen; they sometimes have insignificant insurrections that are not so easily controlled. To-morrow, at 8 o'clock, they will judge me, probably



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by noon I shall have lived, as a Roman would say. The inhabitants of Calvados must count for something, since even their women are capable of steadfastness; but I don't know how the last minutes will pass, and it is the end that crowns the work. I have no need to affect indifference as to my fate, for up to this instant I have not had the least fear of death. I never valued life except for the good it might accomplish. I hope that to-morrow de Perret and Fauchet will be set at liberty; they pretend that the latter accompanied me to the Convention, to one of the tribunes. . . . I hope that you will not drop the business of Madame Forbin; here is her address if you need to write to her: Alexandrine Forbin, at Mandresie, near Zurich in Switzerland. Please tell her that I love her with all my heart. I am going to write a line to Papa; I say nothing to my other friends, I ask of them nothing but speedy forgetfulness, their affliction would dishonour my memory. Tell General Wimpffen that I believe I have helped him to gain more than one battle in facilitating peace. Good-bye, citizen, I ask all true Friends of Peace to remember me.

The prisoners in the Conciergerie, far from reviling me like the people in the street, seem to be sorry for me; unhappiness makes people compassionate. That is my last thought.

Tuesday 16, at 8 o'clock in the evening.

To Citizen Barbaroux, deputy to the National Convention, refugee at Caen, rue des Carmes, Hôtel de l'Intendance.

CORDAY.

The high spirit of the woman beats in this letter; she glories in her deed, and would be glorified by her Calvados; she wishes her features to be perpetuated; she wishes Barbaroux to make public her last words.

Is it too much to ask, this small flicker of posthumous fame, when she, to-morrow, in the strength and beauty of her twenty-four years will be giving her blond Norman head to the executioner? She loved Alexandrine de Forbin, and no doubt Barbaroux, brilliant, facile, good-looking, was more or less sympathetic to one side of her nature; she writes to him easily, as to a comrade who will understand. Happily she could not foresee that in a few hurrying weeks Barbaroux, far from occupying himself with the pension of an ex-canoness, would be proscribed, an outlaw, fleeing from Caen in disguise, and that General Wimpffen, instead of gaining or losing battles, would be hidden away from arrest in a friendly house at Bayeux. The deadly hunt would be up for all the friends of Charlotte Corday.

The letter to her father she had left to the last. Here it is in its heroic simplicity:

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To Monsieur de Corday d'Armont,  
rue du Bègle at Argentan.

Forgive me, dear Papa, for having disposed of my life without your permission. I have avenged many innocent victims, I have prevented many other disasters. The day will come when the people, undeceived, will rejoice at being delivered from a tyrant. I tried to make you think that I was going to England, because I hoped to keep my incognito, but now I see the impossibility of that. I hope that you will not be in any way molested. In any case I know that you have friends in Caen. I have taken for my counsel, Gustave Doulcet; such a crime as mine permits of no defense, it is merely for the form. Good-bye, dear Papa; forget me, or rather rejoice at my fate. The cause of it is beautiful. I kiss my sister whom I love with all my heart, as well as all my relatives.

Do not forget this line of Corneille:

*Le crime fait la honte, et non pas l'échafaud.*

To-morrow at 8 o'clock I am to be tried. This 16 July.

CORDAY.

The words of her great ancestor came naturally to her, since his spirit was part of the very constitution of her mind, she who, in the act of writing such a letter as this from a cell in the Conciergerie, might so confidently have been one of his own heroines, noble, pure, implacable, accepting death without a gesture or a tear, as the logical outcome of her own violent act. Hard and cold as was the mental surface she

presented to the world, yet beneath it generous ideas were in ferment—all the lovely passion and uprush of those first conceptions of Liberty, of Freedom, of Justice for all the world that had so intoxicated the youth of 1789. To see the sentimental purity of her conception soiled and brutalized by such a man as she supposed Marat to be transformed her ardour to revenge. In her narrow provincial life, turned in on herself, in the concentration of her temperament, there was no outlet for normal desires. In such a mind a fixed idea finds a congenial habitation; in such a mind, proud, bold, opinionated, the design to rid France of a monster did not grow up alone. Beside it, increasing and affirming itself, was the companion-picture of the so-called feeble woman, who, in all Calvados, was to be the only one to make the march on Paris in her proper person, to hunt out the wild beast and to kill him where he crouched. There was a vivifying turn in her blood as she listened to the proscribed deputies; she had at last found the true way to be most truly herself. By no weakening of act or word did she ever retreat from that position, once taken, once deeply entrenched in her mind. So she could sit in her stifling cell that summer night in Paris, writing as calmly as

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though she were back in the Old Manoir, with little Louis playing in the court, and the knife that was to cost forty sous still clean in its case in the shop in the Palais-Royal.



## XXII

AT eight o'clock the next morning, July 17, Charlotte Corday, under guard, was taken up through the vast Prison, mounting stairways and passing through galleries, to reach at length the hall in the Palais de Justice where her trial was to take place.

At one end of the hall, in the centre of an estrade, were the seats for the President, the Public Prosecutor, the judges assisting at the séance; at one side a tribune for the jurors, at the other, one for the accused and their counsel, or sometimes, as in this case, a chair was given the accused in front of the President's table. A wooden barrier separated the estrade from the rest of the hall where the public were admitted. The President and members of the Tribunal were dressed in black, with black cloaks and white cravats, a broad tricolour ribbon across the breast, with a medal attached. They wore broad-brimmed hats turned up in front with a tricolour cockade above which waved a cluster of black plumes. There must have been some-

thing rather gallant and bizarre about this strange legal costume, much criticised as it was by the "pures" who would have preferred red pantaloons and the red liberty cap.

The desire of the crowd to see a woman accused of a capital crime had been increased by rumours of Charlotte's youth and good looks. The crowd was enormous, invading the corridors of the Palais de Justice, flowing like turbulent water into the great hall. The morning was bright and hot.

Charlotte was brought in, quite free, her hands not tied. At the sight of her a murmur ran through the spectators—what had they expected to see? Certainly not this self-possessed, quiet, young woman, simply dressed, not a Parisienne, with nothing in her face or attitude to indicate that she was to be tried for her life.

She seated herself as she was told, in full view of all, and the examination began—the same general questions to which she had already twice replied. Her manner was completely unemotional.

Upon the President asking if she had counsel, she replied that she had chosen a friend, but had since then heard nothing more on the subject. Apparently he had not had the courage to un-

dertake her defence. The President, seeing Chauveau-Lagarde (afterwards to defend the Queen) in the hall, called to him and said that the Tribunal appointed him counsel for the accused.

After the Public Prosecutor's address to the Court, the witnesses were called, it still being the hopeful desire of Fouquier-Tinville that a plot might be discovered, and a few more heads added to the daily count.

Simonne Evrard, sobbing, gave her deposition—" . . . a cry coming from the cabinet where Marat was caused her to run to him; she found the accused upright against a curtain in the antechamber; she seized her by the head and called the neighbours; the neighbours came; she then ran to Marat, who looked at her without saying anything; she helped to take him out of the bath, and he died without saying a word."

Charlotte, troubled by the tears and the violent grief of Simonne, interrupted her, as though to make an end of it all—"Yes, I killed him," she said loudly. The case proceeded, the accused readily giving details of what she had done. She told of the two letters she had written to Marat, asking for an interview and soliciting his protection. On being reminded that such an act

was very like treachery, she admitted that it was not worthy of her, but all means were good to save one's country; furthermore, to get at him she had been obliged to pretend esteem for him; such men were suspicious.

Asked who had inspired her with such a hatred for Marat, she replied that she had no need of the hatred of others; she had sufficient of her own. . . .

Asked what she had hoped for in killing him, she replied: "To give peace to my country."

Upon the President continuing, logically enough, with a foreboding of what was to come: "Did you think, then, to have assassinated all the Marats?" She, clinging desperately to her idea: "He dead, perhaps the others will be afraid." That "perhaps"!

Laurent Bas and the women of the household were then called, Charlotte acquiescing in their account of what had occurred. Madame Grollier of the Hôtel de la Providence testified that a man, unknown to her, had come to the hotel to see the accused. Charlotte replied that it was Lauze de Perret, whose name had been given to her by Barbaroux at Caen. . . .

Asked what the refugees at Caen said of Robespierre and Danton, she replied that they

considered them, with Marat, as instigators of civil war. . . . Asked whether it was from the papers that she read that she had come to think of Marat as an anarchist, she replied yes, and that she knew that he was perverting France; that she had killed one man to save a hundred thousand, . . . that she was a Republican long before the Revolution, and that she never lacked energy.

The whole woman spoke there; her spirit must have leapt out in her look, in her eyes, in the tone of her voice that was said to be low and clear.

Asked what she understood by energy, she replied: the resolution of those who put private interest aside and know how to sacrifice themselves for their country.

Asked if she had not practised beforehand the stroke with which she had killed Marat, she replied: no, that she was not an assassin. . . . If she struck as she did it was by chance. . . .

De Perret deposed that he had known the accused only since the Thursday; he described the packet of papers left at his house, the arrival of the visitor to go with him to the Ministry of the Interior; the impossibility of going that night; the address of the visitor's hotel; he goes to fetch



her the next morning; their fruitless call at the Ministry; the proposed return at eight o'clock that evening; the placing of the seals on his effects; his visit to the hotel of the accused to warn her that he would be more harmful than helpful to her. . . .

The valet of the hotel deposing that he had seen de Perret there on the Saturday, Charlotte replied that he had not been to see her that day, that she had expressly forbidden him to come; that she did not wish him to be compromised; that she had even urged him to go to Caen, as she did not believe his life would be safe in Paris. . . . Asked whether she had not had the intention of assassinating the Minister of the Interior when she tried to see him with de Perret, she replied that if she had had such a plan she would have taken good care not to have brought de Perret with her as a witness. She had nothing against anyone but Marat; did she not do what she did to give peace to France? Asked again who were those who had influenced her to commit the assassination, she replied that she would never have committed such a crime by the counsel of others; that it was she herself, she alone who conceived the plan and who executed it. . . .

De Perret being asked what impression the accused had made upon him, replied: that of a good citoyenne. She had told him about the good the deputies were doing at Caen and had advised him to join them there. Asked how he could consider a woman a good citoyenne who could advise him to go to Caen, he replied that he looked upon that as a matter of opinion. . . .

When a clerk handed Charlotte the knife, as a proof of her crime, and asked her if she recognized it, she turned her eyes away in disgust, as though she saw now only the ugliness of blood-stained steel, only the sordid realism of what, at a given moment, had been to her as the shining sword of an archangel. "Yes! I recognize it, I recognize it!"

Fouquier-Tinville, wishing, perhaps to goad her into showing emotion, harped upon the fact that the blow—famous by now—with which she had killed Marat, might so very easily have turned out a failure, a little more horizontal and the knife would have struck a rib. "You must have trained yourself well for this crime!" Then she: "The wretch! he takes me for an assassin!"

Her indignant voice sent a thrill through the

crowd, pushing and pressing up against the barrier.

Charlotte's letters were then read—the two to Barbaroux and the one to her father. Being asked whether she wished to add anything to the last letter to Barbaroux, she said: "Only one phrase: 'the leader of anarchy is no more; you will have peace.'"

She had begged the Tribunal to send the letters to Barbaroux; she had urged him to make her last words public; she had written the farewell to her father, yet the Tribunal, with the callousness of the legal mind in full play, had indifferently attached these letters, almost sentient, warm from her hand, to the other papers relating to her trial, all to gather dust together in some pigeon-hole of the Archives. In the same way, the last letter of Marie-Antoinette, written at four o'clock on the October morning of her execution, was never read by those for whom it was intended. It was found among Robespierre's papers after his death. In the revolutionary current each one is fighting too hard for himself to have any time for the amenities of existence. Good manners, a decent respect for others, imaginative pity—all go the way of the old régime, only to come creeping

back again when desperate bleeding has cleared chimeras out of wild heads. . . .

The trial was over; the Public Prosecutor demanded the penalty of death. It was now the moment for Chauveau-Lagarde to make his formal defence—a formality merely, for there was nothing for him to plead since the accused had admitted a premeditated crime, had not even tried to justify herself. Yet he was not insensible that he had before him a Roman figure, this young woman, who, in the face of death, could show “such calm, such entire abnegation of self,” an attitude to be explained “only by the exaltation of political fanaticism that had placed the dagger in her hand. It is for you, citizen jurors, to judge what weight this moral consideration should have in the balance of justice.”

He had struck the right note; he had recognized her heroic fanaticism, the mark of her blood; she was well-pleased.

The jurors deliberated; then returned with their verdict: the accused was found guilty and condemned to death.

“It is ordered that the said Marie-Anne-Charlotte Corday shall be taken to the place of execution clad in a red chemise. . . . Further ordered that the present judgment shall be exe-

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cuted by the diligence of the Public Prosecutor on the Place de la Révolution [Place de la Concorde] of this city, printed and posted up wherever there may be need throughout the whole extent of the Republic.”



### XXIII

FROM contemporary accounts there is no doubt that Charlotte's extraordinary sang-froid made a profound impression on the court and silenced the crowd. She was apparently as unmoved at hearing her sentence, as though it were some commonplace legal triviality over which she was obliged to waste her time. Fed by an inner exultation, at peace with herself, her great work done, she could fold her hands and lay down her head, cropped for the knife, as simply as if she were going to sleep.

Before she was taken back to her cell, she thanked Chauveau-Lagarde for the courage he had shown in defending her, and the manner in which he had done so, "worthy of you and of me." As her money had been confiscated, she asked him if he would pay for her the small debts she had contracted in prison. Much moved, he hastened to do this the next day—when she had need for nothing else, either in the Conciergerie or elsewhere.

The trial had lasted longer than she had

expected, judging from a word or two she exchanged with Richard, the concierge, when she was being brought down to her cell.

It was hot, with something dull and thunderous in the air. If her spirit was oppressed, she gave no sign of it. Courteously she refused the services of a priest.<sup>1</sup> Spiritually, according to her own personal formula, she was at peace—resting deliciously in that marvellous Peace her own act had consummated. Let her dream carry her to the end.

If she refused a priest, she accepted a painter, receiving in her cell Jean-Jacques Hauer. She may have thought that the Committee had granted her request to be painted while she had still two or three hours to live, but it is more probable that it was due to Hauer himself that permission had been given for a hasty sketch of Charlotte to be made. Hauer, an Alsatian, was sufficiently well known to the government as a patriot; he had a command in the very section of the National Guard, members of which had been called out on the night of Marat's assassination. His artist's eye had been struck, his sense of the strange, of the bizarre becoming the his-

<sup>1</sup> Possibly because she would not receive one who had taken the Constitutional oath.

toric had been aroused, and he had made a point of being in the courtroom with his sketch-book this morning when Charlotte's trial took place. It was he whom she had noticed in the midst of her interrogatory, with his drawing on his knee, his eyes on her face, and she had turned toward him as much as possible to ease him in his work. He was sympathetic to her, and she posed with pleasure, seated in a chair in the vaguely lighted airless cell, her Normandy cap on her thick fair hair, her blue eyes untroubled. In the notes that Hauer left of this one unforgettable séance of his life, he said that Charlotte spoke naturally of what she had done, repeating that it was for the good of France. From time to time she made certain suggestions in regard to his work, and at length asked him if he would not send a small copy of the portrait to her family.

Some two hours had passed in this tranquil manner when there was a commotion at the door. Sanson, the executioner, came in, carrying the red chemise and the scissors to cut her hair, the concierge and various clerks and hangers-on pressing in after him. Charlotte turned her head, looked at him, at the hideous red garment, at the bright steel of the scissors but all she said was: "What, already!"

The judgment was read out to her, while she sat quietly in her chair. When the reading was over, she took off her cap and made a sign that her hair was to be cut. It was long and beautiful, and Sanson, as a man of sensibility (according to his apocryphal memoirs) was moved at the sight, and also by the fact that Charlotte's lips did not lose their colour. When the shining hair had fallen around her, she picked up a lock of it and gave it to Hauer, thanking him for his interest in her, and saying that she had nothing but this to offer him as a souvenir. He treasured the hair as long as he lived, but after his death, as rare things will, it vanished. The rest of the hair she gathered up and handed to Richard for his wife.

She slipped on the red chemise over her light gown and fichu. She asked Sanson if she might put on her gloves before he tied her hands, because, on being first arrested, her wrists had been so cut into by the cords that they were still painful. Sanson told her that he knew how to do it, so that it would not hurt her, and she smiled and held out her bare hands.

When all was ready, she walked out of the cell, invisibly accompanied by the aura of her

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own unshakable belief in the glory and honour of her act. If Marat were to go to the Panthéon, she, too, would take her draught of immortality from the minds of men.



## XXIV

IT was seven o'clock; the long hot afternoon was drawing in, livid clouds were rolling up before a thunderstorm. In the courtyard in front of the Palais de Justice the cart was waiting to take her to the guillotine. She came out through the low archway at the right of the steps. An enormous crowd had been waiting for hours to see her come. At the sight of her a hideous din arose, but these cries were merely the recreation of a certain type of individual, without *parti-pris*, to whom a fellow-creature going to his death furnished a kind of sadic excitement.

Not losing her self-control for an instant, Charlotte got up into the cart. She stood, her head lifted, her gaze composed and cold. According to Sanson, it rained and thundered when they reached the quai, but a deluge would not have scattered the people. That figure of gold and white and red fascinated them. From a window on the rue Saint-Honoré it is said that Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, and Danton

watched her pass. Of these three men, the one who was to outlive the others had only a year and ten days more of life. All three were to follow this same route, jolting in the same rough cart—Camille, voluble, hysterical, stretching his arms in despair to this People that now deny him; Danton, the Titan, with folded arms, as contemptuously brave as Charlotte; Robespierre, the last to come, half-dead already from his wounded jaw, prone on the bottom of the cart, thrown there like a miserable simulacrum of a man. . . .

All along the route crowds gathered, surrounding and following the cart. Going at a snail-like pace because of this, it took two hours to reach the Place de la Concorde. During all that time Charlotte remained standing, her composure untroubled by the cries and the insults shouted at her. She looked serenely over the heads of the people in the street, but seemed to follow with her eyes those visible at the windows of the houses on the rue Saint-Honoré. Perhaps she was not averse to fixing her superficial attention on something only negatively painful; without that a rush of memories of her youth might have swelled up and choked her, making her lose the icy calm that was her only protection. San-

son is supposed to have asked her if she did not find the way long, and she, disdainfully, by way of reply: "Bah, we are always sure of getting there." In truth, her bell was now ringing to even-song.

The rain had stopped, and a splendid stormily purple sunset was flooding all the sky beyond the thick green of the trees in the Champs-Élysées. The air must have been deliciously cool and fresh; no scent as yet of newly spilled blood.

The guillotine was probably placed not far from where the obelisk now stands. The terrace of the Tuileries would be black with people. Charlotte, without waiting for any assistance, quickly went up the steps. As she reached the platform one of Sanson's men pulled off her fichu. She threw herself on the plank. An instant, and the machine was set in motion; another, and her head was picked up and shown to the people, the blue eyes half-open. The head had been seized by a man named Legros, a carpenter who worked at repairing the guillotine. Thinking to ingratiate himself as a "pure," he struck the cheek with his hand, but a murmur of horror ran through the crowd to answer him. Some even thought to see the dead flesh redden under this last insult. Legros was roughly

reprimanded by the police, and later served eight days in prison for his abominable gesture.

At this same sunset hour, another woman, a *révoltée*, too, who persisted in thinking, judging, acting for herself, as Charlotte Corday had done, but not to such a Roman extreme, being more the sentimental than the heroic type, might have been enjoying the coolness of her "solitary house in the midst of a garden" in the village of Neuilly, near Paris. Did she, Mary Wollstonecraft, give perhaps a shuddering thought to Charlotte, or was the image of Imlay too absorbing, or was she detached enough to be considering merely, as she walked up and down the garden, her "Historical and moral view of the French Revolution"?

The body of Charlotte was buried in the cemetery of the Madeleine where now run the *rues des Mathurins* and *d'Anjou*, to be followed in a few months by the bodies of the Queen, of the Girondins, of Madame Roland, and of who knows how many others, as the Terror rose to its climax in the burning days of another Thermidor—one year from the death of Charlotte Corday.

If romantic love had been unknown to her,

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she at least inspired a passion *plus fort que la mort* in the soul of Adam Lux, who stood amongst the throng about the cart that last day, who followed her, his eyes never off her till she died. Exalted, half-mad, he demanded for himself the same knife that had killed her. As he threw himself into the writing and distributing of seditious posters and pamphlets, glorifying the sublime and incomparable soul of Charlotte, the Revolutionary Tribunal was not slow to grant his request. So her first and last lover died for her, rejoicing.



CHARLOTTE CORDAY had unconsciously played Robespierre's obscure game for him in eliminating Marat, who was becoming dangerously independent; now it was Danton and Desmoulins who obsessed him. As a member of the Committee of Public Safety, later to be elected President of the Convention, Robespierre was growing more and more able to push advantageously his "purifying" of society. To aid him Fouquier-Tinville and the Revolutionary Tribunal bent to the task.

To return to Danton in the June of 1793, four months after the death of Gabrielle: the Danton of February, the man mad with grief, the insane violator of the solemn peace of the grave, that Danton had recovered his equilibrium; the husband in despair had consoled himself, a new dawn of life and love overmastering him. On June 13 Danton married Louise Gély, a child scarcely seventeen, of a royalist and Catholic family. Danton shrugged off such, to him, practically meaningless designations, agreed

to be married by a priest, necessarily one in hiding, and the Abbé de Kéravenant united the man of September with a young girl not yet of age. This amazing marriage seems to have been a happy one, Louise falling under the spell of the passion her frail childish person had excited in the breast of this extraordinary man. Terror must have mingled with her intoxication, terror and fear of what was hanging over all their heads in those July days of '93.

Danton himself, feverish, overwrought, let public affairs slide, besotted by his private felicity. He neglected the Convention; he rarely appeared in Committee; the affair of the tracked and outlawed Girondins haunted him, and Camille's pamphlets that had done so much to hound them to their fall. In this same month of July the Committee of Public Safety was renewed, and Danton and his friends found themselves out, while Robespierre and Saint-Just and their band quietly appropriated their places. Danton felt the stab and it vivified him. He had perhaps thought himself stronger than he was, but he could still strike back. He made his appearance once more at the Jacobins, at the Convention where he was acclaimed. It was at this time that he made his celebrated speech

on popular instruction: "After bread, education is the first need of the people."

Nevertheless, Marat removed from the scene by the knife of Charlotte Corday, Danton could not but be aware of the steady, cold, increasing but still masked hostility toward him of Robespierre. The latter now saw traitors everywhere, even in the bosom of his own Committee, and the definition of traitor that he made *à la mode* at the Jacobins was anyone who dared to differ in opinion from himself. Danton fell easily into this category, for day by day he became more hostile to the uses to which this very machinery of the Terror he had helped to organize was now being put.

In August the Queen was transferred from the Temple to the Conciergerie; in October came her trial. Danton would have saved her, not as a Queen but as a pawn—such a generous policy would have been a step toward peace with Austria. He had had no hand in outlawing the remnant of the Girondins; their fate oppressed him. He was sick of Paris, "drunk with men," disheartened, weary of it all. He thought of his peaceful Arcis-sur-Aube, golden-ripe in the autumnal sunshine, and there in October he took his new wife and Gabrielle's two boys, burying

himself once more in the old familiar semi-peasant life. Here it was, at the end of the month, that a neighbour, thinking to please him, rushed in with a news-sheet recounting the execution of the imprisoned Girondins. Danton sprang up, discomposed, pale, the tears actually in his eyes. He could be generous to the men who had not known how to take his hand—that hand irremediably stained that had yet moulded the Republic into a living organism. They were purists and idealists; he, crude matter, but with an incommunicable spark of genius. He could lament them, his ancient enemies, saying to those about him who did not understand: “All of us deserve death as much as they, and we shall follow them, one after the other!”

He imprudently prolonged his stay in Arcis, letting the country calm of the place, the repose of the earth after the vintage, the empty fields, the bare outlines of the denuded November trees, lull him into a kind of mental and physical stagnation. But he was wrong in this; at such an hour of crisis no one is strong enough to absent himself lest his colleagues, seduced by opportunity, see a clear way to rid themselves of him. Such was the view of his friends in Paris, sending a messenger down to him, begging

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him to return, hinting that he was personally in danger, that Robespierre— He would not listen; that was not his way: "Go and tell Robespierre that I shall be back in Paris soon enough to crush him and his creatures!" Bluster was but a poor weapon against that which was preparing, drop by drop, in the seclusion of the Duplay house. He was uneasy nevertheless; the charm of peace was broken; he went back to shoulder a dying man's burden.



## XXVI

SINCE July, when Robespierre had gained possession of the Committee of Public Safety, the Terror had lengthened its stride; prisoners now appeared in batches before the Revolutionary Tribunal and were despatched the same day to the guillotine by an admirably organized procedure. The Queen had been followed by Madame Roland, whose old husband in hiding in Rouen stabbed himself at the news of her death; by Philippe-Egalité, despised and fallen; by Bailly, ex-Mayor of Paris; by Manuel, friend of Danton; by men, women, old, young—all making the same brief tragic journey. And no one who looked on, stupefied, dared to protest; the atmosphere was too dense, the personal danger too pressing.

Then Danton came, the erstwhile Titan, presuming, in the face of Robespierre, to pronounce the dreaded magic word: *Clemency*. Desmoulins, at Danton's suggestion and under his protection, brought out, on December 15, his new paper *Le Vieux Cordelier*. The first two

numbers were given over to skirmishing, but in the third the battle was set: under the well-worn disguise of Tacitus, Camille drew a deadly picture of the working of the law of suspects; in the fourth, he dared to use the word that had been crushed back by fear on every lip: "I think very differently from those who tell you that we must keep Terror the order of the day. On the contrary, I am certain that liberty would be consolidated and Europe conquered if you had a *Committee of Clemency*." So Camille, risking his own head, in the ardour of what was highest in him.

Yet Robespierre made no sign, for Danton could still be useful to him; could still play his game. The object now was to finish with Hébert, that foaming demagogue, and to check the wave of atheism that had turned Notre-Dame into a Temple of Reason, and a handsome opera girl into the goddess thereof. This mumery disquieted the precise Robespierre, who, as a disciple of Rousseau, considered that a Supreme Being was necessary to a democratic state, to raise up the patriotic innocent and to cast down the aristocratic proud—exactly what he, this Being's prophet on earth, was engaged in doing. The Committee of Public Safety or-

dered the arrest of Hébert and his associates; the Commune unexpectedly made no move to save its own. Paris was weary unto death of them, and to death they went.

Hébert disposed of, Robespierre was now ready for bigger game. Danton's campaign of clemency was beginning to stiffen cowering public opinion, to cause certain dangerous heads to be raised in the Convention, to agitate the stagnant air in the Committees. But he preferred to let the blow come from another hand—the stripping Saint-Just was to face the giant. A fanatic as absolute as Robespierre, he possessed, along with his youth and insolent boldness, a cold, hard, rapid power of decision and a realistic sense of actual politics that his leader lacked. He had beauty, too, carrying his head “like the blessed Sacrament,” as Camille once said of him.

For weeks, in the Convention, they fought with words, subtle, envenomed weapons that inflamed their several wounds. One by one, skilfully, the friends and supporters of Danton were detached from him and imprisoned on some pretext or another. He felt the cold strangling current bearing more and more swiftly down upon him, yet to his anxious intimates his great voice could still ring out with the old heartening

bravado: "They would not dare!" But he was losing ground; he no longer answered insults with the once familiar front of brass; something had broken in him; his heart was sick; life had suddenly turned as foul as the blood-stained world about him. He still made fighting gestures, but with secret despair. Desmoulins and Lucile were seized with panic, realizing that Danton was no longer able to protect them; rather, he was carrying them down into the whirlpool with him. Even the printer, fearing to compromise himself, refused to set up the last number of *Le Vieux Cordelier*.

Saint-Just had prepared the requisition against Danton, this report in which all the old hates and suspicions against him found their due place—all the scandals he had dragged after him for years, like a prisoner's chain. Robespierre held his hand until the thirtieth of March, when he gave the signal. The decree of arrest was voted by the Committees, and gendarmes were sent at once, in the middle of the night, to the Cour du Commerce.

In those early spring days before the thirtieth, Danton, fatuously reassured by an apparent slackening in the attacks against him (in reality, but the quivering pause before the tiger's leap),



had taken Louise to Sèvres where he let the days slip by in a kind of tranced inaction, his last breathing space before the end. To Camille, nervous, alarmed, who urged flight upon him, he made his famous answer: "You do not carry off your country on the sole of your shoe." To another, who begged him to be on his guard, he cried: "Do you see this head of mine? Doesn't it sit well on my shoulders?" But, impressed against his will, he returned to Paris, to the old apartment, dumb witness of his happy hours, gone now, forever, along with so much else, precious and fair. There they warned him of the action of the Committees, of his imminent arrest. "Let them come," was all his answer.

He waited up through the night, sitting by the fire in a last melancholy colloquy with himself. He must have known then what would be his end. Suddenly, in the night silence, the tramp of feet in the cadence soldiers use, the rattle of muskets on the stones of the Passage. They had come for him. . . . His wife, his children, this room, these walls—he filled his eyes with their material presence, then turned away and left them. He was taken to the Palace of the Luxembourg, transformed into a prison,



there to meet Camille who had been arrested at the same hour.

Lucile, in despair, rushed to Louise Danton, and the two young women thought of nothing better to do than to appeal to Robespierre, the family friend. But at the house in the rue Saint-Honoré orders had been given. Robespierre's door was closed, he would see no one.

From his prison room in the palace, Camille wrote despairingly to Lucile: ". . . live for my Horace, speak to him of me. Tell him that I loved him. In spite of my agony, I believe that there is a God. My blood will efface my faults, the weakness of humanity. . . . Adieu, Loulou, my life, my soul, my divinity on earth. . . . I still see Lucile! I see her, my beloved, my Lucile! My bound hands embrace you, and my head, separated from my body, will still rest on you its dying eyes!"

## XXVII

WHEN Danton's arrest was known at the Convention, there was a heavy silence, only the butcher Legendre venturing a feeble word in defence of his oldest friend. Robespierre followed Saint-Just into the tribune and with the composure of one who has a situation perfectly in hand demanded the head of a false idol that had been rotten for long. They gave it to him.

The second to the fifth of April was occupied with the trial. The Palais de Justice was besieged by a vast throng, bewildered at the staggering news that the man of the tenth of August, the man who above all others typified the triumphant Revolution, that this man was being tried for his life. They could hear on the quays, even across the Seine, so it said, the sound of his voice in the rage and fury of his defence, that thunderous voice that had made itself a tocsin when the country was in danger, that had electrified peasants into soldiers of the Republic, that had saved France for the people.

In spite of the fact that there was a packed jury, that it had been intimated to Fouquier-Tinville that he would answer with his own head if Danton's did not fall, such was the man's magnetic power, the force of the Titan with his back to the wall, that for a moment the issue seemed uncertain and acquittal a possibility. But the ear of Robespierre was alert; that fabulous voice of Danton must be silenced. Instantly it was decreed that the trial must close; there would be no hearing of witnesses; there would be no defence; sentence would be passed in the absence of the prisoners. The President of the Tribunal closed the proceedings. It was the master-stroke of treachery. Now Danton recognized the hand that was manipulating the knife — "Robespierre . . . cowardly assassin! The guillotine calls for you also. You will follow me!"

It was Robespierre who only a year before had written to Danton: "*Je t'aime plus que jamais et jusqu' à la mort.*" He had been a witness at the marriage of Camille, had frequented the Duplessis circle, had caressed the baby Horace, Camille's son. But no souvenir of friendship could ever move him; his fanaticism placed him, in his own eyes, on a plane to which

his fellows could never attain, even imaginatively. Whether his physical eye watched or not, on that April evening, the gloomy procession of Danton, Desmoulins, and the rest moving for the last time along the rue Saint-Honoré and past the Duplay house, in his soul he was unconscious of remorse. He had a mission; these men had incommoded him in his high task; they must go: Desmoulins, the trifler, who had presumed to use the word clemency; Danton of the ravaged face, the would-be dictator with his dangerous eloquence.

On the fifth of April, in the afternoon, the carts were made ready to carry them to the scaffold—Danton, Desmoulins, Fabre d'Eglantine, Hérault de Séchelles, and eleven others. Danton's bare head, his haggard face, towered above the rest. All the way was dense with people, come to see him die, as to a spectacle, this people of Paris for whom he had once been a god; now not even one voice was raised, not one cry of protest or farewell. Callous or sheeplike, they closed in upon the carts, curious enough in the bright spring weather to follow the sensational convoy to the end. Danton's gaze ranged high and scornful over their heads. Beyond the housetops, beyond the foulness of the city is ever

the purity of the sky. The poor Camille, tortured by his nerves, hysterical, filled by some fantastic hope of rescue, appealed to the crowd, shrieked his name—did they realize whom they were letting die? Danton put an end to the pitiful show, quieted him with some fleeting transfusion of his own masculine energy, his own defiance of death. What was it, after all, but a long sleep? How would it seem to have rest, rest after this bloody scuffle they called Life? . . . When he caught sight of David, the painter, an old friend of Marat's and his, standing on the terrace of a café, ready to make a sketch of him, bound in the jolting cart, Danton's rage broke out. So bitter was the scorn in the epithet that he threw at David over the heads of the crowd that the painter turned away, unable to meet his look.

The interminable course along the rue Saint-Honoré at length brought them to the Duplay house, closed, obstinately dumb. But Danton, furious at the thought of the man who lurked there, still all-powerful, cried out to him in his great voice: "You will follow me!"

When the moment came to get down from the carts, Danton would have embraced his friends, but the executioner's assistant prevented



him. He reproached the fellow: "Fool! Will you prevent our heads from meeting in the basket?" Danton was the last to mount to the slippery foul platform. The sky was bright at this evening hour; the gardens of the Tuileries fresh and rustling in the young green of the new leaves. A moment of natural human emotion. He was heard to murmur: "My beloved, I shall never see you again." Then, recovering himself in an instant "Come, Danton, no weakness!"—he called to the executioner with that note in his voice that had so often brought the Convention cheering to its feet: "Show my head to the people; it is worth showing!" And this was done.

During his last hour Camille held a miniature of Lucile in his hand, calling her name over and over again to himself: "My Lucile! My Lucile!" A week after his death it was the turn of this loved woman. She was accused of being implicated in some obscure prison plot; her complaints had wearied the master of the hour. She died courageously, writing a line to her mother: "Good-night. . . . I am going to sleep."

## XXVIII

**I**N this June of 1794, following the execution of Danton, when Robespierre was luxuriating in the brief mirage of absolutism, the remnant of the outlawed Girondins who had reached Caen a year before so high in hope, now agonized, their end near.

Charlotte Corday had sacrificed herself for an abstract principle; she was capable of taking an intellectual position from which not even torture could have moved her; in her action the head was far more directly engaged than the heart. Yet she knew the strength of pity, too, pity and compassion for the sorrows of France—her country, the symbol of the highest, demanding and obtaining the supreme immolation of self. She was the classic “virgin of the knife,” as Albert Sorel called her, she was “greater than Brutus” as Guadet admiringly exclaimed.

But there was another woman, living her obscure commonplace life in distracted France at that moment whom Charlotte Corday would have honoured, for she, too, could count her

own life but a small thing in comparison with the right to follow an impulse of a generous heart: Thérèse Dupeyrat, wife of Robert Bouquey, sister-in-law of Elie Guadet, one of the Girondins with whom Charlotte had spoken at the Hôtel de l'Intendance at Caen.

When the proscribed deputies were declared *bors la loi*, the authorities at Caen weakened in their support of them, for it was now death to anyone who should give the refugees shelter. The passing of Marat had only tightened the growing grip of the Terror. There was nothing left for the eager group of Girondins, excited, enthusiastic, who had thought to rally all Normandy to their aid, but to hurry away as best they could in disguise. It was the end of July, and in the summer weather the fields were all yellow in the sun. Heavily and wearily they trudged on, making their way to Brittany, to the coast near Quimper, thinking to take a boat that would drop them on the shore near Bordeaux. Once in the Gironde, they counted on being amongst friends and supporters. These were the men who carried with them the heroic souvenir of Charlotte.

The little group was composed of Guadet, whose family had lived for generations at Saint-

Emilion, in the Bordeaux wine region, and who looked for refuge there for himself and his companions; Barbaroux, once *beau comme un marbre grec*, now, alas, growing fat and scant of breath, Barbaroux to whom Charlotte poured out her last scattering thoughts before the end; Buzot, the admirable stoic lover of Madame Roland, wearing her miniature always about his neck; Pétion, *le beau Pétion*, who had known a moment of triumphant ambition when unanimously chosen Mayor of Paris; Pétion, who had "brought back" the royal family from Varennes, riding in the coach with them, making himself "agreeable" as he rather fatuously believed; Louvet, the gay author of rather scandalous witty tales, the indiscreet lover of the charming Madame Chollet, whom he celebrated under the name of Lodoïska; Louvet, the only one of the doomed band to escape, living through the torment and on into the nineteenth century; and Salle, the sober country doctor with a turn for letters, poor Salle who, in hiding, wrote his (unreadable) tragedy of *Charlotte Corday* to occupy the long cruel empty hours.

It was not until late in September that the group was reunited in the Gironde. At Bec d'Ambès, Guadet hoped to find shelter, for his

father-in-law, the citizen Dupeyrat had a country house there. But it was closed and empty. He had no better luck in Bordeaux itself, where the Terror was supreme, newly installed, the orders flowing steadily down from Paris. No one would take him in. Rage and death in his soul, there was nothing left for him to do but to make his way to Saint-Emilion. If he found a refuge there, he would send back a guide for the others. No refuge was found, but, nevertheless, by the end of September they were all together at Saint-Emilion. They were in desperate case, for they knew that a revolutionary force was close upon them. They passed the night in an abandoned quarry, and thereafter decided to separate. In the municipal archives of Saint-Emilion there are traces of the presence of the refugees in the neighbourhood, "wandering like wolves," toward nightfall. A witness is quoted as having seen several strangers before six o'clock in the morning, dressed in brown, with red collars and revers, carrying sword-canes, each one with a linen bag under his arm. Two others joined them, one of fine figure and the other smaller (Buzot? Pétion?) dressed in faded green coats with cocked hats. Another person, who met them in the darkness, at eight o'clock at night,



said that fear of them "took away all desire to know how they were dressed."

After miserable and hopeless days, hidden in deserted barns, or in the woods, "an angel" came to their rescue—Thérèse.

Saint-Emilion, of Gallo-Roman origin, is honeycombed beneath with enormous winding catacombs. It is built over ancient quarries, and a vast network of caves extends in all directions. Every house, almost, has an entrance into these subterranean grottoes, parts of which, walled off, serve as cellars. Under the Bouquey garden were large crypts where anyone could lie concealed, but the entrance thereto was perilous, down the slippery sides of a deep well, by means of holes cut in the stones. At a certain distance below the surface of the ground was the opening into the galleries, icily cold, with almost irrespirable air.

Thérèse was either in Paris or at Fontainebleau when she received a letter from her father, the citizen Dupeyrat, telling her of the tragic situation of her brother-in-law, Guadet, and of his companions. That was enough for her, for the woman that she was. Without an instant's hesitation, probably without telling her husband—a timid soul—of her plans, she took the dili-

gence for Saint-Emilion. Once there, she opened her house and secretly notified Guadet that he could come to her. This he hastened to do, bringing Salle with him. From them the generous creature heard of the miserable state of the others—hunted, starving, tracked from covert to covert. After word reached them, one by one in the darkness the hospitable house in the rue du Chapitre engulfed them, Pétion and Buzot, ever together, the last to come. They were a lamentable sight, with their haggard eyes, their rough beards, their clothes filthy and ragged; yet, burning in all of them, like a fever that would give them no rest, was the mere desire for life, the animal clinging to that which is no longer any source of joy.

And Thérèse was the mother of them all, this young, gay, brisk woman of thirty-one, presiding at the table where, for the first time in months, the refugees could eat and be filled. It was the twelfth of October, and that midnight supper was a merry one, strained nerves relaxing in a sense of dreamlike security, in warmth, in peace.

But it was obviously impossible to keep half a dozen outlawed men in the house, which was not an isolated one. Thérèse had had time on

her journey down to think out what she would do. The crypts under the garden were large enough to shelter a dozen men. It was into them that the Girondins let themselves down. There were two caverns, one under the other, with an aperture for access. Thérèse gave the men mattresses, a table, a couple of chairs. They had a lantern—each day some new comfort came from their indefatigable hostess—forks, spoons, books, a warming-pan. They dared scarcely speak, for there were disquieting echoes through the vast chain of caves.

In the *Memoirs* of Louvet he gives the reader to understand that they had two refuges, one underground and the other in the house, in a concealed part of the attic. This is more than probable, for it would have been impossible for them to have lived for any length of time in the cavern; in case of an alarm, they could retire there. It was no easy task for a woman who was supposed to be alone in her house with one servant to buy enough food for six men, but according to Louvet she had a good store of potatoes, and beans, and in order to miss breakfast less they did not get up till noon. They dined on a soup made of vegetables, but when night fell and darkness brought them a renewed

sense of security, they would creep out of their hiding places and gather around their hostess, who would be sure to have some extra dish prepared for their supper—a bit of beef secured with infinite precaution, some eggs, some milk. Louvet was sensitive enough to find the right words: "She was like a mother in the midst of her children for whom she sacrificed herself."

They were all in mortal danger; a domiciliary visit from the authorities and her life would cease as well as theirs. Of this she was perfectly aware, but in her infinite unselfishness, all she found to say to them was, half-laughing: "I am only afraid that they will arrest me, and then what will become of you!" She was a noble creature.

So the autumn days went by, their rich beauty invisible to the refugees. But if the outer world were shut away from them, they could draw upon an inner one, where all the pictures of their lives were painted on the sliding screens of memory. What tumultuous, vivid sketches they might have made of the early days of the Revolution, if they had had the gift! But they were orators, talkers, moving men by the spoken word. They became a little cold, conventional,



didactic, once they took up a pen. Nevertheless, they wrote, wrote to benumb themselves, wrote to pass the interminable hours of inaction, to substitute what they thought to be the true image of themselves for that crystallised by their enemies. So they wrote down their memoirs—Pétion, Buzot, Barbaroux, and Louvet—manuscripts that by the strangest of chances came at length into the hands of the father of Anatole France. Salle alone turned from himself and his own experiences to glorify the deed of the girl he had seen at Caen. Hour after hour he composed his verses, cold and dead as the classic tradition, uninspired and dull, yet moving, simply because he who wrote them might have touched her hand.

With the coming in of October bad news began to make its way to those in hiding. On the seventh, Gorsas, one of their fellow-deputies at Caen, was guillotined, and by the end of the month those of the leaders of the party who were already under arrest in Paris—Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, and the rest—went steadfastly to their end, along with the unfortunate Lauze de Perret to whom Charlotte had unwittingly handed death in the letter she had brought



him from Barbaroux. Anarchy was triumphant; if a faction in the National Convention could cause the imprisonment and execution of other members of the same body, no one was safe—the era of blind terror had set in. What helpless despair and profitless rage, eating into the hearts and minds of the wretched refugees at Saint-Emilion!

By the end of the first week in November, Thérèse could no longer conceal from them that matters were going from bad to worse. There had been the inevitable secret suspicion of her, growing more and more precise. It was beginning to be known now that she was concealing them in the house. By a miracle there had been no domiciliary visit as yet, but . . . Here the warm-hearted woman broke down, and, crying, told them that she could shelter them no longer. Her husband and her relatives were forcing this upon her, as they said she was endangering all their lives. "I shall never forgive them!" she exclaimed. "If any one of you . . ." she could not finish. They were like sons to her—the only ones she had ever had.

So there was an end to the peaceful, almost happy interlude before the coming on of their

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agony. Even the melancholy cavern, furnished with what little comforts their "guardian angel" had been able to give them, with their books and their manuscripts, had taken on a pitiful, fleeting resemblance to a home.

## XXIX

THEY prepared, stoically, to go, and at one o'clock in the morning of the thirteenth of November they left the house in two groups—Barbaroux, Pétion, and Buzot to wander off vaguely "toward the coast," Guadet, Louvet, and Salle taking the direction of Libourne. The friend, a woman on whom Guadet had counted for shelter, refused quite frankly to have anything to do with them—they were not to find another Thérèse. After miserable days and nights of hiding, Louvet declared his intention of making for Paris. If he must die, he would die walking towards his adored Lodoïska. It was mad and romantic, and perhaps for that reason it succeeded. Louvet was the only one of the tragic little group to survive.

Guadet and Salle, hopeless and starving, circled about the countryside like lost dogs, drawing in again, nearer and nearer to Saint-Emilion. On the outskirts of the town was the pleasant country house of the elder Guadet, with its court and garden and clipped lime-tree walk. The house

had been under surveillance since word had come that the outlawed Girondins were in the district. There was danger, but when Guadet and Salle neared the house after midnight no one was in sight.

A rap at the window; the old man of seventy opens to them. Here is his miserable son, the once brilliant deputy, the leader in the Convention, now but a piece of human débris. The father lifts him up and takes him in, together with his companion. The window is closed; the light put out; only the night wind in the vines; nothing suspicious here.

The next day, very early, they feverishly arrange a hiding-hole. Salle can turn his hand to anything, and now he dexterously removes two planks from the boarded ceiling of a kind of shed, or pent-house, lower than the main building, opening out of the bedroom of the elder Guadet. Between the ceiling and the tiled roof there is just space enough for the two men to crouch in stifling proximity. Light and air can filter only through the tiles of the roof. They mount by a ladder, the boards are exactly replaced—no sign of their presence anywhere. But such an airless retreat would be impractical for any continuous length of time. Guadet

senior, however, was able to persuade the authorities that he had had no intercourse with his son, and that the guards should be removed from his house. Luckily for the refugees, this was done, and they could now come down from time to time from their cramped hiding-place and even "sup with the family." For almost eight months—from November, 1793, to June, 1794,—the two men lived in the tiny space under the tiles, and so flexible is human nature that Salle could even write here the better part of his tragedy, begun in the cavern under the Bouquey garden. Guadet's eyesight was so poor that he could not write—so much the worse for him, lying there through the dragging vacant hours, feeding upon his misery, upon the poison of injustice, upon his helplessness, cursing Robespierre, now paramount in Paris.

Just at this time Tallien, the proconsul of Robespierre at Bordeaux, was inclined to let matters drift, not being interested in spilling blood for the mere sake of doing it. But there was also a woman at Bordeaux, looking over Tallien's shoulder, inclining him to spare heads rather than to beat them up for his "bag"; another Thérèse (but how different!) this enchanting *ci-devant* Marquise de Fontenay, to be



known as Notre-Dame-de-Thermidor, as the Madame Tallien of the Directoire, as the Princesse de Chimay of the Restoration, Tallien divorced and forgotten. Tallien knew perfectly well that the Girondins were somewhere in Saint-Emilion, but he did nothing to hunt them out. Pétion, Buzot, and Barbaroux, roaming about from one shifty hiding-place to another, no doubt owed their comparative safety to this attitude of Tallien. They grew to be known by sight to the peasants, who called them the émigrés and who gave them a wide berth, instinctively feeling that they were accursed.

The news of Madame Roland's death, guillotined in November, reduced Buzot to despair. He carried her precious letters always with him, her miniature on his breast. Like her husband, Roland, he could only mutter: "the scoundrels have killed her," but, unlike the poor Roland, he had the intimate conviction that her last heart-beat had been for him.

Early in January, 1794, he, Pétion, and Barbaroux were concealed in the house of some compassionate person whose name is not known, probably some one in the confidence of Thérèse Bouquey. Robert Bouquey was now at home, and his wife and he would sometimes see the

refugees in secret and give them news of Guadet and Salle. Through their hands letters passed between the two groups. Salle sent the manuscript of his tragedy for the criticism of his friends, and Pétion, Buzot, and Barbaroux each wrote characteristic commentaries, rather severe and with little thought for Salle's amour-propre, but they were beyond polite lying, and Salle was no poet.

Pétion objects violently that Salle has made Danton, Barère, and Robespierre "less odious and less vile than they really are. Their characters are treated as too much alike. I know of only one trait that they have in common—cowardice." There leaps the jet of bitterness. Nothing could be less true of Danton, but certainly Robespierre was the type to lend himself to such a superficial judgment. He gave Madame Roland, and other unfriendly observers, an impression of flustered timidity when things went wrong. Pétion, like everyone else who reads a tragedy in manuscript, deplores the undue length of the speeches and suggests that a severe revision would not be amiss. Poor Salle, called upon to revise in a stifling hiding-hole where he could not even sit upright!

Barbaroux, for his part, asks Salle, "Why did

you not bring on the scene that sympathetic Adam Lux, who was really in love with Charlotte?" Salle had thought to heighten the interest of his play by introducing a lover for Charlotte, and with singular lack of perception had pitched upon the so-called "Alcibiades of the Dantonists," Hérault de Séchelles, for the part. Barbaroux's taste not being so good as Buzot's, he merely suggests one lover for another. After criticizing the versification and other faults that occur to him, he ends with: "I am hard to please on the subject of Charlotte Corday. I wish that you would get the *Moniteur* in which her examination and the letter that she wrote to me are faithfully reported, and that you would not forget a single one of the traits that mark her noble soul." *Sa grande âme*—Barbaroux's admiration strikes warm across the page on which he wrote.

Next, Buzot, who alone has the kindly formula that means nothing: "First of all, I have read your work with pleasure. . . ." Then he strikes to the root of the matter: "What would Charlotte Corday think if she saw herself represented as almost in love with Hérault de Séchelles? . . . Above all, no love in a piece of this kind; it is never good as a secondary motive in dramatic

action; but above all banish it from yours; it is petty, it disfigures the real beauty of your play. The impropriety of it here is glaring. . . . There should be nothing great in your tragedy but Charlotte Corday; nothing fine but what she says. . . . Again, I do not think that Charlotte's deed must necessarily produce the effect that you imagine on the men in power in France. The truth is that it has been very useful to them . . . the murder of Marat has excellently served the cause of Robespierre, Bar [Barère?] and Danton, who furthermore have been delivered from a dangerous rival, or at least one very prejudicial to their personal ambition."

If any proof were needed, these words of Buzot would show that the Girondins at Caen were far from being Charlotte's accomplices.

But these comparatively tranquil days, when the refugees could occupy their minds with literary criticism, was to come abruptly to an end. The mysterious person who was sheltering the three, afraid of a visit from the police, told the men that they must go. It is amazing that they did not take their own lives; no religious scruple held them. But they clung desperately to the hope that a counter-revolution in Paris would bring them back in triumph. Barbaroux



could write to Salle: "The fall of our persecutors is not far distant," just three months before the actual event, but that was longer, alas, than any of them could afford to wait.

When Thérèse Bouquey heard that her protégés were on the world again, she and her husband (he in mortal fear by now, for he knew how deeply they were engaged) and probably the younger brother of Guadet, persuaded the barber and hairdresser of the town, Baptiste Troquart, to hide the fugitives. They paid him a round sum down, and charged themselves with getting a certain amount of food for the three men, particularly bread. Troquart was not supposed to know who they were; their names were never spoken; they were understood to be friends of Guadet, endeavouring to get to Switzerland to join him.

The Troquart house was in the centre of the town, at the intersection of two streets, and was thus in a sense isolated. It consisted of a ground-floor shop, and above that a large unused garret-like room. It was there that the men took refuge, all three together. They had a bed, a mattress on the floor, an old armchair. Troquart was unmarried and had no servant. His shop was open to all, but no one had ever



been in any other part of his miserable dwelling. He had many clients in the neighbourhood, and as he made his country rounds he would accept payment in garden-stuff, in vegetables, eggs, flour, or even a bit of pork. In this way, without arousing suspicion, he could bring in enough food each day to supply his equivocal lodgers, especially when Madame Bouquey's donations fell short. But Thérèse was constant in her kindness, in her imaginative kindness, for she not only sent them food and clothes, but books and even flowers. There is a charming touch when Buzot writes to thank her for sending them roses to brighten their "*pauvre et sombre azyle*"; she has thereby brought back the memory of their lost liberty, "alas, these spring roses, their tender green leaves, we never expected to see them again."

Barbaroux and Buzot went on with their memoirs, probably Pétion, too, although Troquart said he never saw him writing, but he would sit for hours inert in the old armchair, devoured by his thoughts. It was while they were with Troquart that Pétion and Buzot did, indeed, decide to commit suicide, drawing up a joint manifesto to that effect, but giving a political motive for the act—life would mean only

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a choice between two despotisms, that of the brigands within France, or of foreign powers without. Perhaps; but more likely it was an oratorical commonplace, a suitable reason à la Plutarch to cover the shuddering blankness of their souls.

### XXX

BY the beginning of March it was known that Tallien had been recalled from Bordeaux, in disgrace for his leniency. War was declared between him and Robespierre. Meanwhile a bizarre and docile tool for terrorist work had been found in the nineteen-year-old Marc-Antoine Jullien, the son of a member of the Convention, whom Robespierre let loose like a young bloodhound on the trail of the proscripts. All the spring he was beating up the country around Saint-Emilion, from Libourne to Castillon and Sainte-Foy, trying to get on the scent of the hidden ones. The vast chain of caverns, though full of a rout of men and dogs, gave out nothing but lugubrious echoes. It is possible that through a treacherous word Jullien became convinced that the elder Guadet was concealing his son. In the middle of a June night he sent General Mercier and two commissioners to surround Saint-Emilion with troops, while soldiers filled the Guadet house. The search lasted for hours without result, Guadet and Salle lying in

an agony of suspense in their wretched hiding-hole. Presently, as fate wills such things, some one's eye was caught by certain boards in the ceiling of the shed; they looked as if they might have been displaced. A sudden question caused the elder Guadet to lose his composure; instantly a carpenter was found; men got up on ladders and began to hack away at the roof of the pent-house. The last scene was beginning.

There was the click of a pistol missing fire, and voices from the hiding-hole, heard above the rattle of the falling roof-tiles: "Stop! We are here." They displaced the board for the last time, and Salle came down the ladder first. He was mad with excitement and despair, and insisted upon talking until Mercier threatened to have him gagged. Elie Guadet then appeared, quiet and composed. Both men were searched, Guadet's watch and purse taken, and a packet made of their papers and manuscripts, two copies of Salle's *Charlotte Corday* among them. All this was sealed up to be handed over to Jullien. The elder Guadet, his sister, and two women servants were charged with complicity and arrested. Meanwhile the Bouquey house was searched, suspicious letters found, the hiding-place in the attic discovered. Then followed the

arrest of Thérèse, of her husband, Robert Bouquey, of her father, Xavier Dupeyrat, who had been in Saint-Emilion only a few days. He was seventy-six years old.

The night had passed and it was now day, and all the little town of Saint-Emilion was in a stupor of surprise and fear. Guadet and his son, the deputy, were amongst the most considerable men of the district, honoured and respected, yet there was no one to help them now. By the time the searching parties had finished their work and seals had been affixed in both the Guadet and Bouquey houses, it was afternoon—an afternoon of mid-June, with its sunshine and its roses. Down the streets of the old town, in a sudden silence, came the rattle of the sinister cart, taking the prisoners to Libourne, and thence to Bordeaux. The elder Guadet was seated at the side, his son standing in front of him, and those near enough could hear him crying over and over again, in a voice of despair, "Oh, father, father, we are going to die, and it is I who am the cause of your death. It is I who have killed you!" They heard also the quiet reply of the old man: "Well, *mon ami*, if we die it will be for the good cause."

With them in the cart, bound to it, their



hands tied, were Salle, Marie Guadet, the aunt of the deputy, Thérèse, Robert, Dupeyrat, and the maids. The crowd was silent; people looked on, afraid of being suspected if they did not, but their eyes were burning. Charles Vatel, in 1867, talked to an old man whose brother had been one of the volunteers who arrested Guadet. He could never forget the scene in the cart, and the heartrending sound of the deputy's voice begging his father to forgive him—"ah, mon père, mon père! . . ."

On the nineteenth of June the younger Guadet and Salle were condemned at Bordeaux. When the two men appeared on the scaffold there was something in their bearing that impressed the mob. "Look at us well," cried Guadet, "you see the last of your honest representatives." A sudden roll of drums drowned his voice; in a moment he and Salle, in Charlotte Corday's Roman phrase, had lived.

The condemnation of the others was a matter of course. A more detailed search of the Bouquoy house had led to the discovery of the cavern of the Girondins in which were numerous signs of their stay there—objects lost or left behind. In a tin box were all their letters, the memoirs of Pétion and of Buzot, letters of

Madame Roland, and the miniature of a woman (Madame Roland) that Buzot had so long had on his breast. It still exists, as does the miniature of him that she wore, with a tiny morsel of paper slipped in under the case—a description of him in her handwriting.

This evidence against Thérèse Bouquey was decisive; she was condemned. The poor woman, warm-hearted, excitable, was in despair, beside herself. She would not let the executioner's assistants cut her hair. She struggled with them and they were brutal to her. To put an end to the scene, the elder Guadet took her in his arms and held her head down against his breast. The hysteria passed off mercifully in a passion of tears. Thereafter she was calm, so much so that she could ask to be executed last in order that her husband might not see her head fall. And this was done.

All these people died because the elder Guadet was guilty, quite simply, of being a father, of raising up a starving and hunted son and giving him shelter. The Public Prosecutor even offered himself the luxury of a popular reference to Brutus, whom, it seems, Guadet did not sufficiently resemble, and the crowd applauded loudly.

## XXXI

ALL that June day, when Saint-Emilion was in an uproar, when the two households were being arrested, when the streets were filled with soldiers and police, what must have been the mental suffering of the three crouched in the suffocating upper room over Troquart's shop, listening, or peering through a crack in the wooden shutter? They could hear the grinding of the wheels of the cart over the uneven street, and shudder at the voice of Guadet, repeating over and over again his pitiful litany. When night came, they prepared to go; it was obvious that Troquart could conceal them no longer. Each wrote, as if in anticipation of an end that now must be near, a last letter—Pétion and Buzot to their wives, Barbaroux to his mother. These letters they confided to Troquart. They were armed with pistols, and Barbaroux had in addition a hunting-knife.

When it was night and all was quiet, they got away by the eastern gate of the town. They had no passports (theirs were in the tin box at

the Bouquey house), they had no map, and none of them knew the country. They could not walk fast, for they had had no exercise for so long. All night they wandered about, vaguely trying to find an unguarded point where they could ford or swim the river Dordogne. By morning they had only reached the Community of Saint-Magne-de-Castillon. Not far from the road was a pinewood, with cultivated fields between. In the midst of one of the fields were two old mulberry trees that cast a deep and tempting shade. Under one of these trees the three sat down to rest and to eat what food they had brought with them. They spread their handkerchiefs on the ground, and cut up the bread and meat. Then something happened—a noise of men passing on the highroad, volunteers marching by, perhaps, with sound of drums? At all events, the three sprang up in alarm from under the shelter of the trees, convinced that they had been tracked from Saint-Emilion. Buzot and Pétion got quickly in among the pines and were out of sight. Barbaroux, for some reason, was unable to follow them. The men on the road heard a pistol shot; they stopped, and looking across the fields saw two men disappearing into the wood. Under the mulberry trees

they found a third, covered with blood, who had shot himself in the side of the head. He was still breathing. It was early in the morning, but as no one would touch an outlaw, the miserable Barbaroux agonised there, through the long, hot hours, till half-past three when the officials from Castillon arrived. They had him carried to the nearest farm, and laid upon straw at the door, for no one would receive him inside. Later he was lifted up and put in a chair. A little boy, who was nine years old at that time, in his old age told Charles Vatel how he had seen the émigré "seated in a chair, dying, covered with blood; his eyes were fixed; he looked at the people around him, without being able to speak. I see him still; he had on trousers made of ticking on which the blood showed up." Another eye-witness had seen "a dark man, with very brown skin, the hair and beard black. . . . Some said he is a traitor from Paris; the others pretended that it was either Pétion or Buzot. Later they knew that it was Barbaroux. No one did anything for him; they gave him neither water nor wine nor anything else. . . . The chair was in front of the door. Barbaroux lay back in it, half dead."

Barbaroux, the happy lover of Zélie, and of



how many others, with that fine dark head of his, the mobile mouth of the orator, all the fougue and élan of the south in eyes and voice; now come to this, soiled with blood, tortured with thirst, dying, speechless all through the endless burning day. In the evening they took him to Castillon where his wound was dressed; then, in a few days, to Bordeaux. He could scarcely speak, but he was able to establish his identity. He was guillotined on the twenty-fifth of June.

It is supposed that Buzot and Pétion left the pinewood, believing Barbaroux to have killed himself. They walked on, restlessly alert to leave behind them that blood-stained figure in the field of corn, to leave that tragic warning of their own near end. Could they have reached Civrac and the ford, they might have made their way to the Spanish frontier, but all such hopes were worse than illusory now. The sand in their hour-glass was all but run out, and they knew it. They halted where they were, in a field, not far from a little wood.

In the twilight, it was said afterwards, two shots were heard, but no notice was taken of them and it was not until eight days later that the bodies were found. They were lying on their backs, not far apart, and in an unrecog-

nizable state; dogs had been at them, and it was their barking that had attracted attention. Men going into the field, treading down the tall grain, saw the two bodies in an advanced state of decomposition. They at once suspected that here were the two émigrés for whom Jullien was looking. They notified the authorities, and that night, by the light of torches, the bodies were examined as far as was possible. The description of Buzot shows that he was still dressed in his long dark-brown redingote with collar and revers of red velvet. There was a black-silk handkerchief about the neck. The pockets of the dead were torn open with hooks, and a gold watch was found in Buzot's. Pétion was recognized by his hair, prematurely grey; he wore a woolen vest, breeches of grey cotton velvet, white stockings with broad blue stripes.

The bodies were buried hurriedly on the spot where they were found, in a large trench, and for a long time that part of the field was never plowed and sown—"around them the earth laboured no longer." The spot was known as the Field of the Emigrés. The memory of the Girondins faded out, their names were confused or forgotten, but during long years the dim tradition persisted that here, on this little spot

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of earth, during the time of the great Terror, something mysteriously tragic had taken place.

Charlotte Corday had gone to the guillotine, full of the illusion of her own triumph. Peace, her Peace for which she had given her life, was hovering over blood-red France with its unstained sustaining wings. Believing this, she could tranquilly face her last sunset over the Champs-Élysées, for she was going to join her peers, those men of the old heroic time who had known how Romans should die. But the tracked remnant of the Girondins had no such imaginative drug to numb them. At bay, in the field of corn, in the June twilight, nature all beautiful about them, but with the ashy taste of despair and failure in their mouths, they made their final gesture. Less fortunate than Charlotte, their death was not instantaneous. The grain was beaten down about the spot where they had lain, convulsed. . . . Then all fell silent in the summer night until the dogs came.

DANTON'S disappearance from the scene removed one of the last checks on the Robespierre policy. Danton, seething with revolutionary ideas, had yet been capable of vision other than the enticing dream of personal absolutism. He had been appallingly prompt to strike, but also as prompt to see when Terror should no longer be the sole means of governing men. There was some leaven here of the statesman; none in Robespierre. But it was the latter, thin-lipped, cold, meticulous, with the secret force of the fanatic flashing out of him suddenly, sharp as the steel of the guillotine itself, who triumphed now. Danton and Camille had died in the spring twilight, still young, still burning with an insupportable sense of agony, of defeat, and Robespierre was left icily alone, with "his" Jacobins in leash, "his" Revolutionary Tribunal, with "his" Convention that was to become before the end—so subtle the half-superstitious fear he inspired—scarcely more than a machine to vote his decrees.

Now it was that Robespierre's inherent hollowness declared itself. He had acquired a position of enormous potential power, but he did not know how to use it. For the blood-stained weariness of the spirit in the very air about him, he had nothing better to offer than the vague cult of a Supreme Being, whose pontiff he was to be himself. The new revolutionary gospel might be summed up in: Be virtuous and you shall find your happiness in killing tyrants; be brotherly, and if your brother chance (as is extremely probable) to be a traitor, hasten to denounce him. So was to be built up the great bulwark of civil morality à la Robespierre. The man had no humour, very little imagination. In a long, flowery, and tedious speech to the Convention he developed this theme dear to him, and this exactly places the amount of political tact he had at his disposal. The new religion was to be inaugurated with suitable pomp by a great fête. The Convention, well-broken by now, decreed what it was asked to decree, while individual members raged. But from this hour his enemies sniffed the tainted air, taking courage from this extraordinary strategical clumsiness that might have unexpected consequences if pressed.



On the eighth of June—the twentieth Prairial (by a coincidence Whitsunday)—in the hot brilliant sunshine, came the highest moment of Robespierre's individual triumph. In front of the Tuileries a temporary amphitheatre had been raised up, covered with garlands of foliage, with urns of flowers, with plaster figures and flags. It was all rather foolish, in the pompous overstrained taste of the moment. In the midst, a great statue of Atheism of some combustible material hid within itself a representation of Wisdom, sufficiently robust to resist the flames. On the Champ-de-Mars a symbolic Mountain had been constructed, with a grotto, a temple, tripods, and the inevitable civic altar, the shrine of all pure patriots. There were innumerable choirs and bands of singers from the Opera and special music had been written for them. David, the painter, was in charge of the arrangements, and he sought to avoid the ridiculous as much for his own reputation as for the sake of his dreaded patron.

From early morning on the eighth, the people had been pouring into the Tuileries, eager for whatever might be going forward. The seats for the members of the Convention were ranged in a semi-circle on a great platform, at the sum-

mit of the amphitheatre; in the midst, in an open space, was an armchair raised above the rest, the "throne" for the President, for the Pontifex Maximus of the new cult. With all Paris at his feet he might well imagine himself supreme. The illusion, intoxicating in anticipation when he had left the Duplay house that morning, a symbolic nosegay in his hand, was to fade away in a ripple of half-stifled mockery, in the barely suppressed sneers of his colleagues. What was to have been his cloudless hour turned cold and grey on his hands. A dictator can never afford to be ridiculous.

The proceedings began decorously enough; the crowd amiably cheering him to the echo. He read a formal speech (mercifully short) from his throne-chair, and then came the critical moment when he was to apply the torch to monstrous Atheism and set what proved to be a blackened and sooty Wisdom free. In the broad light of honest day the theatrical triviality of the proceeding became apparent, even to himself. The ceremonies unrolled themselves throughout the cloudless June afternoon in warmth, in colour, in all the tumult of a vast throng of people, pushing, crowding, enthusiastic, eager to see and to hear. To music, amidst singing, to

the waving of green boughs, of flowers, of flags, the procession crossed the Tuileries gardens and made its way to the Champ-de-Mars on the other side of the Seine. Robespierre walked royally alone, some twenty paces ahead of the other members of the Convention, pale, grave, his hat in his hand, all his pleasure in his triumph tarnished by the mocking sarcasms of his companions. What other treatment could he expect from the men who detested and feared him, from the friends of Danton, of the Girondins, from all those who remembered that their heads were but unsteadily set upon their shoulders, especially as they passed just now into the Place de la Révolution from which the guillotine had been hurriedly removed for the occasion?

There was certainly disequilibrium in the mind of Robespierre; a certain *bizarrerie* in the father perhaps turning to something graver in the son. Amazing that the man who could incarnate the Terror in his proper person, with thumb down for the friend who might become an enemy overnight, could at the same time conceive the futile and childish mummery of this Festival of the Supreme Being and see in it the very pinnacle of his life's work.

It was late when Robespierre, exhausted, re-

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turned to the Duplay house. The sudden revelation of the sneering hordes of his enemies in the Convention, the wounds to his morbid self-esteem, some subtle realization of his own essential emptiness mentally overwhelmed him. Even the loyal Le Bas had heard enough that day to murmur to his wife, in a panic: "The country is lost!" Robespierre himself could say, in an access of black discouragement and fatigue, to the sympathetic inner circle of devotees gathered around him in the Duplay salon: "You may not see me here much longer." A prophetic gleam.

### XXXIII

**B**UT he pulled himself together, and his answer to the malcontents, not long in coming, was devastating in its thoroughness. The rebellion among the deputies must be stamped out; the Terror accelerated. Two days later, on the tenth of June, he forced through a stupefied Convention the so-called Law of Prairial, by the terms of which practically unlimited powers were given to the Revolutionary Tribunal; the prisoner had no longer a right to his defence, all encumbering preliminaries were swept away, all interrogatories, all calling of witnesses; death was made the sole penalty, death on the simple establishment of identity. Even members of the Convention lost their inviolability; they could be arrested and taken before the Tribunal without the consent of the Assembly. And, finally, the obligation of every good citizen was to denounce suspects.

That such a law could be voted showed more plainly than anything else the almost hypnotic power Robespierre possessed over the Conven-



tion; it also showed his terrified colleagues the necessity for organizing against him. He and his band of satellites, his Saint-Just, his Couthon, and his proconsuls worked together with a deadly precision that was irresistible. From this moment a panic fear for their own heads now united most of the different factions. He could not see that his universal and indiscriminate menaces were driving each individual to fight for his own life. A man might deplore his neighbour's death, yet bear with it, but his own—? Thus Robespierre's eventual downfall became only a question of time, and in the thunder-charged atmosphere of this late June events moved rapidly.

On the twenty-fifth the republican armies were victorious at Fleurus, near Brussels. The Austrians were driven back and France once more saved from invasion. In the wild popular rejoicings that followed in Paris what more natural and simple than to ask one's self—Why, then, the Terror? Why these horrible daily processions to the guillotine? Why are the prisons gorged with prisoners, thrown there on any trivial charge? The Republic was surely strong enough now to resist a few imbecile cries of "*Vive le Roi!*" This was no longer the uncer-

tain time of Monarchy when, in '92, the massacres in Paris had grimly answered conspiring aristocrats; the time was past when reprisals must automatically burst out upon the panic cry of danger on the frontier. Fleurus was a portent; the Republic, young, strong, triumphant, could now afford to think of clemency—that old fatal word of Camille.

If any of the deputies were to sleep tranquil again, Robespierre's grip on the Convention must be loosened. Aside from this natural personal bias to preserve one's own head, those who had any statesmanlike notions realized that a political crisis had come. Red destruction was a failure; no government can subsist on spilled blood alone. Every decent human instinct for peace, for safety, for good-will, for forgiveness, for compassion—one had almost forgotten the use of such words—began to stir and harrass men's minds.

Tallien, Barras, Fouché, returned to Paris from the provinces, were not long in perceiving that they were "suspect" by the master of the hour and that they must act, or he would. The recent arrest of Tallien's adored Thérédia—"la femme Cabarrus"—had maddened her lover, for in these summer days of the Terror there was

but one step from the cell to the knife. For weeks more than fifty deputies never slept in their beds, changing their domicile each night to avoid arrest. Robespierre, solidly supported by his faithful Jacobins, was still supreme in dominating the Committee of Public Safety. He had organised an admirable system of secret police—his spies were indefatigable. In the papers found after his death are minute accounts of how certain suspected deputies passed their time. For instance: "Yesterday the citizen Ta— [Tallien] did not leave his house in the rue de la Perle, in the Marais, from 9 o'clock in the morning till 3 o'clock in the afternoon." The spy, to justify himself, then complained that it was very difficult to keep watch on Tallien, as the rue de la Perle was short and straight, offering no hiding-place and only a stone bench or two by the portes-cochères where one could sit. If a person passed frequently through the street, or lingered there, people would send down a servant to the door, etc. Next day, however, he had better luck: "The citizen Ta— left his house at half-past one in the afternoon, walked along the rue des Quatre Fils, rue du Temple, rue de la Réunion, rue Martin, rue Grenetat, petite rue du Renard-Sauveur, rue Beaurepaire,

rue Montorgueil, passage du Saumon, rue des Fossés-Montmartre; he amused himself for more than an hour at a book stall; entered the Jardin Egalité [Palais-Royal] always looking from one side to the other with an uneasy air. He went into the Convention at a quarter to three where he listened to the report of the citizen Barère, and spoke to one or two deputies; he then crossed the hall and left by the stairs where the chapel used to be; he was going out as if by the Court, then changed his mind and went by the Jardin National [the Tuileries] along the lower part of the terrace of the Feuillants; turned back again; mounted the said terrace by the stairs in front of the Café Hotto; amused himself again, a good quarter of an hour, bargaining at a book stall; from here he took the door by the Riding-School and went into the restaurant Venua; we left at 6 o'clock without finding out where he had gone."

Was it by poring over such reports as these, at night, late, when he was at last alone in his little room at the Duplays', that Robespierre hoped to parry the plots against him? Throughout this June and the beginning of July, he seemed to feel the political ground growing slippery under his feet. He had his moments of



paralysing indecision, when he ceased to face his enemies—no, the enemies of the Republic!—and went off by himself for long walks in the country, into the forest of Montmorency, just as Danton, perishing for lack of a breath of pure air in the dust and blood of Paris, had buried himself at Arcis-sur-Aube in the tranquil village life. It was on one of such walks that Robespierre came face to face with the naturalist Bosc, the friend of the Rolands, who had been in hiding for more than a year. Terrified, Bosc was speechless. Robespierre, although he recognized him, turned away. . . .

It is true that conspiracy was in the very air. The supporters of the Commune, the remnant of the friends and followers of the Girondins, of Hébert, of Danton, and of how many others gone to their death out there in the Place, began to meet in hidden ways to work out some concerted plan. Meanwhile the guillotine continued to function insatiably, and the lists of the condemned to be read out nightly in the prisons for the “batches” of the morrow.

Men were arrested on the most childish pretexts, on suspicion merely. This was the case with the young poet, André Chénier, who in March, 1794, was unfortunate enough to be



found, during a domiciliary visit of the police, in the house of a suspect, a friend of his, in Passy. In this early spring of '94 any excuse for filling the prisons was a good one, and André Chénier by his look, his voice, his hauteur, bore no stamp of "the people's friend." He was taken off to Paris, to the prison of Saint-Lazare.

Born of a Greek mother in Constantinople where his father was connected with the French embassy, André was brought to France as a child. At the time of the Assembly of the States-General he was in London, in a small diplomatic post. In 1790 he returned to Paris, full of enthusiasm, like his brothers and his friends, for the era of philosophic liberty that appeared miraculously to be opening. But he was not long in perceiving the sinister reverse of his dream. A poetical temperament is not one with which to face the ugly realities of Revolution. Revolted, Chénier threw himself into the war of the pamphleteers, writing passionately in defence of the monarchical idea. Too late: monarchy had died in France, almost of its own inanity; too late when the "Triumvirs" of the Clubs and the Committees knew no other law but their own personal will.

It is only surprising that Chénier escaped ar-

rest so long. He had hailed Charlotte Corday as "great and sublime," he had praised her gentleness, her simple and magnanimous words. Desmoulins had already signalled him for denunciation. In the winter of '94 he took refuge in Versailles, feeling it no longer possible to support the shambles Paris had become. Here his mind was in harmony with the deserted and fallen magnificence of the vast château, of the neglected gardens where still in the bosquets statues shone out white as nymphs in the moonlight. He occupied a small house near the Satory gate, just by the park. It was from there that he walked into Passy the day of his arrest.

Once in Saint-Lazare his revolt found its natural expression; a poet, he could give enduring form to the rage and horror that consumed him; he could pillory, at least in words, the assassins who had France by the throat. Yet what regrets! To be young, to be a poet, and "to die before emptying my quiver!"—to die with what thoughts, what images luridly beautiful, coursing through that head so soon to fall. A vision of love came to him in the frail youthfulness of Aimée de Coigny, also imprisoned in Saint-Lazare, whom he named in his charming and tender verses "la jeune captive."

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It appears that Chénier was not in imminent danger; there was no particular charge against him; as the days drew on to Thermidor he was forgotten in the tragic battle between Robespierre and the Convention. But his father, old, frightened, impatient to see his son free, importuned the Committees, any friends of earlier days whom he thought had influence. It is said that Barère, whom he approached in his despair, dismissed him with the deadly irony of the phrase: "In three days your son will leave prison." He did, but in the cart that carried him to the guillotine only forty-eight hours before Robespierre's fall. He was thirty-one years old. His body was thrown, along with those of hundreds of others, in a pit adjacent to the garden of the Convent of Picpus.

#### XXXIV

**S**AINTE-JUST was alert to the danger that menaced Robespierre and himself and their conception of how to direct revolutionary instinct, but he found nothing better with which to threaten the rebellious deputies than a dictatorship that already practically existed, and maladroitly to stiffen opposition by demanding more heads. At this point Carnot, the war minister whose energy and devotion had helped to make possible the triumphant armies of the Republic, but who detested Robespierre, had the inspiration to order a certain number of the National Guard to go to the front. This staggered Hanriot, their commander, the more or less drunken brawler, very much at the orders of Robespierre. The significance of this move was not lost on the Jacobins who saw their "Emperor" threatened with the loss of his praetorians. They petitioned the Convention to denounce the enemies of Robespierre. In the flood of rhetoric that followed, sides were being silently taken by the deputies. Another thorn

in the flesh was the affair of Catherine Théot, a half-mad old woman, a kind of spiritualistic medium who had declared to her devotees that she was the mother of God and that Robespierre was the Messiah. The Committee of Public Safety had foolishly given prominence to the matter by having the poor old creature arrested.

Vadier, an old free-thinking Voltairian, one of the deputies whom the Festival of the Supreme Being had most disgusted, seized upon this as a brilliant opportunity to turn the "idol" into ridicule by associating him in the public mind, he, the high-priest of the new cult, with this disreputable old "mère de Dieu." Robespierre might writhe inwardly, but he could do nothing else.

On the twenty-sixth of July, the eighth Thermidor, he went to the Convention to reply to the attacks against him. As soon as the word ran around that he was to speak, the great hall filled, people crowding into the public galleries from which they could look down on the benches of the members, rising up in rows on either side of the gangway. In front, facing the seats, was the tribune, reached by five steps on either side, from which the orators spoke. Behind it and slightly higher was the President's



desk, with tables for the secretaries at right and left. A trophy of captured enemy flags was displayed behind the President's chair.

To-day Robespierre, in the rôle of an innocent man, indignant at calumny, endeavoring to reduce his detractors to silence, was hopelessly inadequate. The situation by now was, in truth, completely out of his hand. He was not clairvoyant; he was not mentally supple. When a sudden shift of emotion caught his audience, he could not follow whither it led but must read on and on his carefully prepared speech, agonised over at the Duplays'. He struck at Vadier, without mentioning his name, referring to the so-called conspiracy of certain imbecile religious fanatics; he struck at Carnot, hinting at a suspicious use of undue authority in military administration; he belittled the recent victory, "it but arms ambition; it puts patriotism to sleep." The speaker's hypnotic power was ebbing; larger and larger grew the circle over which it was impotent. To-day instinct warned him that he might never finish his work of compressing France into the colourless mould of his own peculiar thought. Men still persisted in being themselves, with their own passions, their own violences, their own ideals and ambitions. Yet

wearily he plodded on in this last speech of his to the Convention. Here were all his old formulæ, chief among them his obsession of hidden enemies everywhere who must be hunted out and given over to the Revolutionary Tribunal—for the good of the country. But when he struck nearer home, when he denounced traitors in the Committees themselves, then the deputies saw the trap opening. "Names! Names!" they cried. "Give us the names!" But he would not; obstinate, insolent in his mutism, not being adroit enough to realize that in openly condemning some few he might reassure the mass. Now the pack saw itself united in a common doom.

The speech ended. Vadier could contain himself no longer. So his famous Report on the Mère de Dieu was nothing but a ridiculous farce—that great conspirator Catherine Théot was merely a foolish old woman to be despised?

"I did not say that," flashed out Robespierre, losing control of his usual contemptuous indifference under attack. Encouraged by Vadier, another deputy seized the moment to make himself the mouthpiece of his fellows: "It is time to tell the absolute truth: one man paralyses the Convention and that man is Robespierre."

Then how the applause broke out! Those

daring words were drunk in like water in a desert-pit. Robespierre sprang up, demanding the right to express his opinion. Then, with one voice, from all parts of the Convention came the cry: "That is what we all demand!" Billaud-Varenne here proposed that Robespierre's speech should be submitted to the Committees before it was printed. "What, you wish to send my speech for the examination of members whom I accuse?"

"Name them, then, name them! . . ."

He left the tribune without another word, and went to sit next to Couthon to whom he talked "with an uneasy air." Well he might, for the revolt against him was alight, fanned into a wilder flame by these voices, one rapidly succeeding another, all crying out upon him and his detested dictatorship, all winning applause.

The decree is brought in and read: his speech shall not be sent to the provinces, shall not be placarded throughout the country. It was a palpable hit. He had been standing while the vote was read out. Having listened and caught the hidden meaning, he dropped into his seat, and one who was near him heard, or imagined he heard, him murmur: "I am lost!" That was no temper in which to take what might only be

a temporary defeat, but his course was almost run, and he had nothing to fall back on in his soul but the parched roots of theories.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when, coldly incensed, he left the Convention and walked back to the Duplays' to dine. Afterwards he went out as far as the Champs-Élysées with the Duplay girls, for these July evenings were hot and airless. At sunset, when it was time to go back for the evening meeting at the Jacobins, Eléonore Duplay, gazing at the western sky all red and gold, made the banal remark that destiny was to transform by its familiar irony: "It will be a fine day to-morrow"—to-morrow that was to be the ninth Thermidor.

That night at the Jacobins Robespierre was received by his fanatical adherents with passionate acclamations, under which he visibly regained tone. The insults of the Convention should be avenged; his friends would save him or perish with him—all the stale, familiar, yet heartening rhetoric—words, words, words. He re-read his speech; enormous enthusiasm, frenzied applause. . . . So there were still men over whom he had not lost his power. The Convention must be delivered from the scoundrels who oppressed it; liberty must be saved! Curious



what a mind he had that such phrases really had a meaning for him. He had a renewed sense of grasping his peculiar wand and with it he applied his magic once more. It worked to the havoc of Collot d'Herbois and Billaud-Varenne who were dragged from their seats and violently ejected from the Club, guilty of having voted in the Convention against the placarding of Robespierre's speech. *Lèse-majesté*.

Furious, they reach the headquarters of the Committee of Public Safety where they discover Saint-Just quietly writing at a table set apart from the rest. As they rush in, disordered, excited, Saint-Just looks up with a sneer under the calm—"What has been happening at the Jacobins?"—knowing full well, and enjoying the spectacle of their anger. Collot d'Herbois seized his arm with a kind of premonition: "You are writing our act of accusation?" Saint-Just quite readily admitted the fact, and turning to Carnot, who was also in the room, remarked: "You are not forgotten in it either." Then he tranquilly went on writing till dawn, the spy at the heart of the Committee. Meanwhile Tallien and Fouché and their friends were feverishly pressing on their negotiations with the moderates



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in the Convention, realizing that they must strike to-morrow or it would be too late.

The morning of the ninth came. After breakfasting as usual with the Duplay family, Robespierre prepared to walk down to the Convention, saying in reply to Duplay's warnings that he believed the majority of the members to be "pure." They were, but not of his tint. He had made a special toilet; his hair was carefully arranged and powdered, and he was wearing the fine violet-blue coat of the Festival of the Supreme Being—his last "good moment."

SINCE five o'clock in the morning the galleries of the Convention had been full of an excited crowd, scenting some unusual scene. Robespierre, his entrance greeted with applause as chief actor, took his accustomed seat near the tribune. But it is the "jeune premier," Saint-Just, who opens the play. He rises to speak. He has an admirable haughty head, carried high above the large folds of his muslin stock; he wears a coat of chamois color, light grey breeches, a white vest. He begins by advocating moderation—his particular brand, one must suppose—trusting, like his chief, in the power of words, and moderation has a fair sound. But it falls dead on the ears of this mad, gesticulating assembly, looking only for its prey—that man in the violet coat, with eyes hidden behind his thick spectacles.

Saint-Just is unceremoniously cried down, interruption being the best weapon of his enemies, especially as neither he nor his leader has the magnificent voice of Danton, nor his brutal

force. Tallien thrusts himself into the tribune and begins a personal attack on Robespierre, rapturously applauded. Then Billaud-Varenne arraigns the Jacobins with all the accumulated venom of months of repression. His words strike home; the hall is in an uproar, the deputies on their feet, waving their hats. The faithful Le Bas attempts to protest, but his voice is drowned in the sinister cry "A l'Abbaye!" Robespierre, goaded by the insults of Billaud-Varenne, makes a dash for the tribune, but the President, Collot d'Herbois, denies it to him, and men crowd around him, shouting: "Down with the tyrant! Down with the dictator!" He succeeds, however, in mounting the steps to the tribune and there stands, gripping the rail with his hand. He tries to raise himself sufficiently to be seen, but his efforts to speak are drowned in a tumult of cries and imprecations. Well might some one mutter: "The blood of Danton chokes him!"

Tallien stands beside Billaud-Varenne, one speaking when the other is exhausted. At each convulsive movement of Robespierre, the President's bell rings out, and a torrent of curses flows over him. He sees the end. During five agonising hours, blood and death, failure, hideous and

complete, stalk about him; his vanity is cut to the bone; stripped of his incorruptible mantle he shivers in the stifling air, a mere wretched bundle of racked nerves.

Tallien demands decrees for the arrest of the traitors, and the whole Convention acclaims him. Robespierre, uncovered, breathless, colourless, is now at bay at the foot of the steps; Couthon and Saint-Just are close beside him, the latter with his arms folded, his eyes impenetrable, apparently unmoved. Suddenly, in a spasm of resolution, Robespierre recovers himself and for the last time attempts to gain the tribune, but Tallien realizes that, even now, there might be danger were this man ever to speak there again. So he redoubles his attack, strikes again and again, all the stored hate and terror of his heart finding at last its volcanic outlet. His victim flinches, gazing blindly around at the Mountain, at the Plain, seeking one friendly face. In vain. "Death. . . . Death," he is heard to whisper over to himself, as though begging it to end torture.

In an unanimous vote his arrest is decreed, the whole Convention on its feet. Robespierre, as though galvanized by his hate, cries out hoarsely: "President of Assassins, I demand the right of

speech—" but his voice is lost forever in the formidable uproar of his enemies. He shall not speak. . . . But he is not quite alone; the political outcast has a brother who fights his way to his side and demands to die with him. His arrest is at once voted. The same for Le Bas, the young proconsul to the armies on the frontier, the intimate of the Duplay circle, the husband of the youthful Elisabeth. It is the same for Couthon; for Saint-Just. The tale is told. Gendarmes hurry them away, and with their going it was as though the world had awakened from a nightmare, surprised to find itself alive.

These men whose very names were so dreaded that jailors hesitated to receive them, were taken to different prisons: Robespierre to the Luxembourg, his brother and Le Bas to La Force.

On these astounding decrees of arrest, it seemed as if, exhausted, the Convention rested; for it the monster was already dead. . . . Far from it; this inaction placed a momentary balance of power in the hands of the Commune that had immediately declared itself in insurrection upon the news of the master's downfall becoming known. Rescued from prison by the Commune, Robespierre and his supporters were now united, but for what? A listless in-



capacity invaded them; after those pitiless hours of violence and of struggle in the Convention a lethargic reaction had set in. Robespierre, never apt at a judgment on the spur of the moment, was incapable of seizing an opportunity as it fled by. Exhausted by the noise and confusion among his excited partisans, he retired to a committee-room adjoining the great hall of the Hôtel de Ville. To ask what was to be done this night was more in his humour than to do something, no matter what, and this is the particular reason why the Terror of Robespierre ceased like a snuffed-out candle. At this midnight crisis he lay back exhausted in his chair, no better than a marionette with broken wires. He was past mending; he would never jig again.

While the Mayor, Fleuriot-Lescot, had caused the prisoners to be delivered and carried in triumph to the Hôtel de Ville, Hanriot had assembled his National Guard and was holding the Tuileries blocked by artillery. As Le Bas was being brought to the Hôtel de Ville from La Force, his wife was able to speak to him in the street. He held her arm, comforted her, begged her to go home. He charged her to bring up their boy Philippe in the love of his country for which he, the father, was about to

die, for he had no longer any doubt of his fate. Elisabeth wept, pressing her body against his arm, sobbing at each word of farewell.

The Jacobins, meanwhile, faithful to their idol, were making desperate efforts to raise the city. Had Robespierre been a different man he might have made short work of the rebellious Convention, but he could only talk now, a dictator of words.

Hanriot, incapable in general, this night at least had had the right idea: to fling his troops against the Tuileries where the Convention had entrenched itself, and clear the hall with shot. But, without backing, he was not of the stuff to act alone, and so the initiative passed out of his hands, ceased to be felt instinctively by his men. The troops were marched back to the Hôtel de Ville. Waiting about aimlessly in the Place de Grève, without definite orders, it was natural that they should gradually melt away into adjoining cafés, their defection hastened by the rain, signalled by certain historians as falling in torrents on the night of the ninth Thermidor, but of which the meteorological reports of the time say nothing, as is the tiresome way of scientific fact in contact with dramatic fitness.

Whether with or without the rain, the Place

was effectually deserted when the armed forces of the Convention, got together by Barras, inspired by his own energy and commonsense, broke in upon it toward one o'clock in the morning.

The besieged Convention could oppose to Hanriot's cannon only a shower of decrees: the traitors, and the members of the Commune in insurrection were put *bors la loi*. That meant the dreaded death without judgment for the criminals themselves and for all who should aid them. But when the mock siege was raised, the Convention regained its head, named Barras commander-in-chief, and ordered the proclamation outlawing the traitors to be read throughout the city. Deputies with their sabres and wearing their tricolour scarves, preceded by drummers and men with torches, roused the citizens in every quarter with the startling news that the dreaded gods of yesterday were now no better than tracked beasts—*bors la loi*. From all the sections, set into clamorous emotion, armed men poured down toward the Place de Grève. . . .

No defence was apparently to be offered by the Commune, but the lighted windows of the great hall showed that the members were mechanically deliberating to the end. While the

troops were beginning to clear the entrance, the figure of a man suddenly appeared upon the narrow cornice of the second floor, some thirty feet above the ground. After an instant's hesitation, he gathered himself together and leaped to what he hoped would be his death. It was the younger Robespierre. If he were driven to suicide the excited watchers realized that the outlaws must be at the last ditch. Deputies, gendarmes, the mob, as with one movement swept into the entrance hall and began to mount the great stairway.

When the leaders rushed into the committee-room it was to find Le Bas dead on the floor by his own hand, and to hear the report of the pistol with which Robespierre shot himself. He fell near the doorway, covered with blood, his jaw shattered. A great cry arose when the people saw him. Saint-Just, unmoved as ever, quite calm and cold, allowed himself to be arrested without a word; there was power there; he was only twenty-six years old. Several hours later Couthon, the cripple, was discovered, shamming death, at the foot of a staircase where he had been thrown like a heap of rags, and Hanriot, lying wounded in a court. Augustin Robespierre when picked up was found to be



in a desperate condition, but he could still speak. He protested his "purity" (that family obsession) and denounced Collot d'Herbois and Carnot as "enemies of the people." There was nothing to be done with him but to keep him alive for the guillotine. In searching him they found in his pockets his card as deputy, a little key and some paper money, all of which objects, stained, rusted, yellowed, may still be seen at the Archives.

Maximilien Robespierre, suffering tortures from his wounded jaw, his face scarcely recognizable, was carried from the Hôtel de Ville to the Tuileries and placed on a table in an ante-room. . . .

There he lies, his precise dress all in disorder, stained with blood, his cravat gone, his shirt torn open at the neck, blood-spotted this as are also his fine coat and his light breeches; his stockings have fallen down around his ankles. Presently he opens his eyes and gradually becomes conscious of the avidly curious jostling crowd that presses about him. His wound bleeds; his mouth is full of blood. He looks up dully into those hostile faces—he, thrown there on a table, a mere *thing* to glut their curiosity, their hate. That was his moment of expiation.



Some one more pitiful than the rest put a morsel of paper between his fingers that he might staunch his wound. It was now day, a brilliant sun flooding the gardens of the Tuileries where only a month before he had overbalanced on the pinnacle of his power, the fallen pontiff whose deity now withdrew to leave him to his fate.

At five o'clock a doctor dressed his wound, washing the swollen livid face, removing fragments of the broken jaw, inflicting exquisite torture. He was then carried in a chair across the Pont-Neuf to the Conciergerie where the jailor could scarcely believe in the identity of his prisoner. He was thrown into a cell, but half-conscious, yet sufficiently so to make a sign that he wished to write. To write! They laughed at him—to write, denouncing his enemies for the last time?

He and the others—twenty-two of them—were taken before the Tribunal for the bare formality of identification. Three carts were waiting in the courtyard of the Palais de Justice to carry them to the guillotine, set up for the occasion, by special decree of the Convention, in the Place de la Révolution where the King,

the Queen, Charlotte Corday, the Girondins, Madame Roland, and what a throng of others had been executed.

It was nearing six o'clock of the July afternoon when the prisoners began their journey, and at the sight of them an immense roar went up from the people massed compactly along the course of the carts. Never had any popular fête drawn out such crowds, never had any military victory been greeted with such cheering, such tears of joy. Every window, every balcony showed happy faces; in each heart profound relief at deliverance from the menace of unjust death, from the creeping darkness of the Terror. There were songs and laughter and hysterical gayety. And in the midst of all this delirium of happiness wound the procession of the three carts. Pitilessly the crowd looked on, gorging itself with the sight of these miserable creatures about to die: Hanriot, wounded, in the first cart by the side of Augustin Robespierre, stretched out as though already dead; in the second, Maximilien, his head bent, his shattered jaw bound up in blood-stained linen; Couthon, the paralytic, motionless, thrown into the bottom of the third cart, trodden upon by

his companions at each lurch of the clumsy vehicle.

A halt was made in the rue Saint-Honoré before the Duplay house, closed and tightly shuttered. Within, as far as possible from the street, Eléonore and Elisabeth cowered upon the floor of a darkened room. . . . What thoughts, what memories lay in wait here for the man in the violet coat! The vision of a late afternoon only last April when these same carts had gone by carrying Danton and Camille. The vision of a bare powerful head, the sound of a voice like a tocsin ringing in massacre. Danton's voice was in Robespierre's ears now.

The Place de la Révolution is reached at last, all luminous with the declining sun, all black with spectators. Couthon is the first to die, carried up the steps to the platform like an armful of broken bones. For Maximilien there is a torturing half-hour to wait, as his turn is next to the last. He lies on the ground, too weak to stand. When his time comes and he appears on the platform, the executioner seizes him roughly, tearing off his bandage in order to free his neck. Such a cry of pain bursts from the wretched man that it is heard from one end of the great

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open place to the other. For an instant of horror his face is seen, shining with blood, the mouth wide open, the broken jaw hanging. But the knife is merciful in its swiftness. . . . Life has finished with one more leader of revolt.

(2)

THE END







